

New Zealand Naval Forces

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION,
FOR THE PERIOD 1ST JULY 1922 TO 30TH JUNE 1923

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

Navy Office, Wellington, 10th July, 1923.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following annual report in regard to the Naval Forces of the Dominion, covering the period 1st July, 1922, to 30th June, 1923.

I. HMS CHATHAM'S PROCEEDINGS.

H.M.S. "Chatham" has continued her primary peace-time duty of visiting the islands of the 1. South Pacific included within the limits of the New Zealand Station, and in affording sea-going training to the locally entered recruits after the completion of their harbour training in H.M.S. "Philomel."

In August, 1922, she visited the main New Zealand ports north of Auckland en route for Lautoka, Fiji, where a month was spent in carrying out gunnery, torpedo, and other exercises with satisfactory results. From Fiji she left for Australia for combined exercises with the Australian Fleet, visiting the New Hebrides and New Caledonia en route, as, although on the Australian Station, visits of British men-of-war to these places are infrequent. Unfortunately, just before arrival at Noumea an outbreak of influenza occurred, necessitating the cancellation of the Australian visit and a return to Auckland, where the crew went into quarantine at Motuihi. Although of pneumonic type, the cases were mild in character, and all made a good recovery. When clear of quarantine the "Chatham" proceeded to Lyttelton, and thence to Wellington.

At Wellington the ship's company of the "Chatham" carried out their annual musketry course at the military camp at Trentham during November and December. I consider that the benefit to discipline and health derived from the annual course at this splendid camp is of equal value to the instruction in small-arms.

As my visit to Australia had been unavoidably postponed, and as there were several important naval matters, in which the Commonwealth and Dominion were jointly concerned, requiring settlement, I took the opportunity whilst the ship was lying at Wellington to visit Melbourne by mail-steamer, where the various matters were arranged with the Commonwealth Naval Board with satisfactory results.

Shortly prior to Christmas the "Chatham" docked at Auckland, and annual leave to the ship's company was given.

The following month I took the three seagoing units on the New Zealand Station (the "Chatham" and the Imperial sloops "Laburnum" and "Veronica") to sea for gunnery, torpedo, and other exercises in the Hauraki Gulf, the experience being

of great value to the young New Zealand seamen and stokers on board the flagship. The latter then proceeded to Australia, where day and night full calibre squadron firings were first carried out outside Jervis Bay with the Royal Australian Fleet. This was the first occasion in peace-time on which ships maintained by Imperial or different Dominion Governments have co-operated, and it is hoped that it may be the forerunner of many others on a wider scale. Such co-operation cannot fail to benefit all units concerned so long as the principles of training and instruction are on the same lines. It is of great technical significance that, although the "Chatham" had only two-hours preliminary practice with the Australian cruisers, there were no hitches or misunderstandings of any description during the exercises, nor during the whole time the ships were together. This is due to the system in vogue in the Royal Navy being faithfully followed in the Dominion Navies. From Jervis Bay the "Chatham" proceeded to Sydney, thence visiting Melbourne and Hobart. I am pleased to be able to report that during the visit to Australian ports the conduct and behaviour ashore of the ship's company were exemplary, evoking special mention in a despatch received by His Excellency from His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia.

On return to New Zealand from Tasmania the "Chatham" visited the Bluff and Stewart Island. thence proceeding to Dunedin, Lyttelton, and Auckland.

The "Chatham" left Auckland in May on a cruise to the western islands of the South Pacific. visiting Sunday Island, Nukualofa, Pago Pago, Apia, and Suva, and enabled me to pay farewell visits to the Governors of American Samoa and Fiji and the Administrator of British Samoa, returning to Auckland in time to effect changes in the ship's company (*vide* Section VIII).

II "PHILOMEL."

H.M.S. "Philomel" has continued her duties as harbour training-ship for new entries and depot. ship at Auckland.

Lieutenant-Commander A. W. S. Agar, V.C., D.S.O., relieved Commander J. G. Walsh in command, with the rank of Acting-Commander, on the 1st January, 1923, on the latter's voluntary retirement under the Admiralty reduction scheme. Commander Agar was in turn relieved by Commander F. N. Miles, O.B.E., at the end of June, to admit of his return to the Royal Navy at the expiration of the term of three years he had volunteered for service in the New Zealand Division.

During the last year improvements have been effected in the "Philomel," partly by ship's labour, at a minimum of expense, to render her more suitable for the varied duties required of her, and her accommodation has been increased by structural additions on the upper deck to provide room for the training of reservists.

During the year under review nineteen seamen recruits, thirty-three stokers; and twelve other ratings have completed their harbour training and been

drafted to the "Chatham," where their seagoing training is carried out. Further classes of ten seamen boys and eight stokers should be ready for draft in August.

III. REFITTING AND STORING BASE, AUCKLAND.

Although but little money was available during last financial year, some progress has been made with the development of the base during that period, and there is now sufficient accommodation stores for the number of ships at present employed on the station, except that a clothing-store kitting-up room for new entries requires to be built, in order not to infringe, as at present, on the accommodation available for the indoor recreation of recruits and ships companies. This is provided for by an ex-Army hut, transferred in 1921, which has been supplied with billiard-tables, furniture, &c., through the kind offices of the Navy League and the Y.M.C.A.

The Admiralty Reserve, adjoining the Calliope Dock, provides grounds for cricket and foot ball and tennis-courts. These grounds badly need top-dressing and re-turfing in places.

By the expenditure of £179 last financial year on the ex-Army hut re-erected in 1921 on the Admiralty Reserve for use as an emergency sick-quarters the building has been made habitable and brought into use, but further small expenditure will be necessary during the current year on the installation of a heating-system and in minor repairs and alterations.

Arrangements have been completed with the General Officer Commanding for the storage of reserve naval ammunition in the military magazines at Auckland, the naval vote bearing the proportionate overhead charges.

IV. H.M. SLOOPS "LABURNUM" AND "VERONICA."

Although these sloops are maintained on the station by the British Government, their proceedings should be of interest to the New Zealand Government, as their duties lie mainly in policing the South Pacific islands within the limits of the New Zealand Station, some of which lie within the boundaries of New Zealand or are administered by her under mandate.

The "Laburnum" visited British Samoa and the Cook Group in July, 1922, and again in June 1923. In June, 1922, she spent some days sounding on the Waterwitch Bank, which is on the track of the large mail-steamers between Suva and Honolulu, and a source of anxiety to captains, as the "Sailing Directions" describe it as having a rim of growing coral. The "Laburnum" took nearly a thousand soundings, but found there had been no appreciable growth of the coral. Between the 21st February and the 14th April, 1923, this vessel carried out a programme of visits to New Zealand ports.

The "Veronica," in June, 1922, carried out a survey of the anchorage of Rarotonga, for which the Union Steamship Company are exceedingly grateful, as masters of the mail-steamers visiting that port previously had to accept great

risks in entering and leaving the roadstead. Between August and November, 1922, she cruised round New Zealand ports, and between the 23rd February and the 20th March, 1923, visited the New Zealand ports north of Auckland.

On account of their limited size and comparatively shallow draft, these vessels are able to visit places that the "Chatham" could not enter, leaving the latter to visit the principal places where the seats of administration of the different groups are established.

V. RECRUITING FOR SEAGOING FORCES.

The following table shows numbers finally entered during the period covered by this report :—

Regimental District.	Ordinary Seamen and Boys.	Stokers.	Artificers and Artisans	Cooks and Stewards.	Other Ratings.	Total.
Auckland	11	8	5	4	2	30
Paeroa	1	4	..	..	..	5
Whangarei	..	2	..	..	..	2
Hamilton	2	..	..	..	..	2
Wellington.	4	9	2	1	..	16
Palmerston North	11	4	1	1	1	18
Napier	7	2	..	..	..	9
Hawera	2	2	1	..	..	5
Nelson	..	..	..	..	..	..
Christchurch	2	3	..	2	..	7
Dunedin	3	3	..	..	..	6
Invercargill	..	..	..	..	..	..
Totals	43	37	9	8	3	100

Numbers discharged or dismissal after Final Entry.

Cause.	Ordinary Seamen and Boys.	Stokers.	Others.	Total.
Services no longer required, unsuitable, dismissed as a punishment	4	2	2	8
By desertion	6	3	1	10
Invalided	3	4	1	8
By purchase	2			2
Totals	15	9	4	28*

* Equal to 28 per cent

Recruiting for stokers has been suspended since the 1st March, 1923.

Since recruiting first commenced, in May, 1921, a total of 225 recruits, inclusive of a few ex-Royal Naval ratings re-entered, have been finally entered, of whom fifty-one have been discharged for the causes given in the above table, showing a wastage over a period of two years of 22.7 per cent.

Recruiting for the Naval Forces. is carried out by the Defence Department, the work being performed by the Staff Officers in charge of the regimental districts and their staffs. This has obviated the. necessity of setting up a separate naval recruiting service, and the Naval Department is indebted to the General Officer Commanding in this matter, and also to the several Staff Officers and their assistants, who have willingly undertaken this duty in addition to their military duties, and have helped to obtain recruits when the numbers coming forward in response to poster and other advertisements have been insufficient to meet requirements. The Director of Recruiting has particularly brought to my notice the very great interest that is being shown in this direction by the Staff Officer in charge of the Palmerston North Regimental District and his staff.

Naval Surgeons and Agents have been appointed at all Regimental District Headquarters, and, with a view to effecting economy, at certain other centres, who conduct the provisional medical ,examination of recruits for the Seagoing and Reserve Forces – except in the Auckland District, where medical examinations are carried out by the Medical Officer of the Training-ship. These .medical practitioners also attend men who fall sick whilst on leave in the places where they are stationed. They are paid fees for the actual services performed, but no retaining fee or other salary.

VI. NEW ZEALAND ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE.

A commencement was made in October, 1922, with the enrolment of men in the New Zealand ii Naval Reserve. The number of men who have applied for enrolment has been very small, entries to date being as follows:-

Class A (Inactive)—Men discharged from the Seagoing Forces in New Zealand other than those joining Class A (Active Reserve). These men are liable to come up for naval service in the event of war, if required, within ten years of discharge from the Seagoing Forces if not then over forty years of age.	3 seamen ratings. 6 stoker ratings.
Class A (Active)—Men who have served in the Royal or any Dominion Navy	4 seamen ratings. 3 signal and W/T ratings 6 engine-room and stoker ratings.
Class B—Men who follow the sea as a profession in the mercantile marine or steam fishing-vessels	1 seaman. 1 engine-room artificer.
Class C—Men ineligible for entry in Classes A and B	4 seamen. 2 stokers. 8 telegraphists.
Total	38

Men enrolled in Classes A (Active), B, and C. are required to come up for training during peace as laid down in the regulations made by Order in Council of the 10th July, 1922. W/T ratings (Class C) are being selected from volunteers

amongst the Telegraph staff of the Post and Telegraph Department. The personnel manning the radio-stations in New Zealand and the islands have been given short courses in naval procedure on-board H.M. ships as opportunities have offered.

It is hoped, within the next few months, to get out regulations governing the enrolment of officers in the Reserve, and then to commence the entry of such number as will be required for auxiliary services in time of war, mainly from amongst those who served in the late war, whose names now appear on the New Zealand Naval Emergency List. This, it is hoped, may materially assist in speeding-up the enrolment of men in the Reserve.

VII. REFITS OF H.M. SHIPS.

The "Chatham" has now been nearly three years without refit at a naval dockyard and has no defects of any note. During this period all defects, alterations, and additions have been effected by ships' labour with the resources of the Auckland Harbour Board's workshops attached to the Calliope Dock, Devonport, under an agreement between that Board and the Admiralty, by which the latter have, since 1909, been paying a subsidy of £5,000 a year. H.M. ships have priority use of the dock and work-shops. This has enabled a repairing-base to be established at Auckland under the superintendence of the Commanding Officer of the "Philomel," where H.M. ships can be repaired by ships labour at the cost only of material required for effecting repairs and the Auckland Harbour Board's actual out-of-pocket expenses whilst ships are in dock.

Since she was altered and refitted for her present service in 1920 the "Philomel" has been kept in repair similarly to the "Chatham," entirely by ship's labour.

The total expenditure on those two ships during the last financial year amounted only to £1.180. This reflects the highest credit on the skill of the technical officers and ratings concerned, and on the foresight of the former in having minor defects made good as they arise, instead of waiting for the ship's next docking and refit, when such defects might have developed into serious ones.

The United States gunboat "Ontario" was docked and overhauled at this yard in May last, the work being performed by contract labour under the supervision of the technical officers at the refitting-base. In this way I was able to render some return for the ready assistance of His Excellency the Governor of American Samoa in arranging for the landing of small stocks of coal for use of H.M. sloops at the Naval Yard at Pago Pago.

The Defence vessel "Lady Roberts" was similarly docked and repaired at the yard in June last, at a cost of £365, for the service of the Administration of British Samoa.

VIII. RELIEF OF TIME-EXPIRED R.N. RANKS AND RATINGS: TECHNICAL COURSES FOR LOCALLY ENTERED RATINGS.

The officers and ratings who originally left England in the "Chatham" in October, 1920, for service in that ship and "Philomel" had volunteered for three years, and, except for some six officers and 108 ratings who have volunteered to continue to serve in the New Zealand Naval Forces for a further short term, had to be sent to England or be discharged in New Zealand, as they might elect, in time to complete the foreign-service leave to which they are entitled by the 30th September next. This has necessitated sending Home fifteen officers and 142 ratings, most of whom left New Zealand by the s.s. "Ionic" on the 29th June, their reliefs, on loan from the Royal Navy, having arrived the s.s. "Remuera" on the 15th June. A further sixty-eight ratings are taking their discharge in the middle of August and settling temporarily or permanently in New Zealand, their reliefs arriving by the s.s. "Corinthic" about the same time. Those taking their discharge in New Zealand are required to join the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve.

In filling vacancies caused by the discharge, of men whose engagements have expired, due regard has been paid to the possibility of doing so by men entered locally. At present New-Zealanders trained as seamen and stokers fill all the subordinate posts in their respective branches in H.M.S. "Chatham," where their training is continued. A certain number of these ratings will shortly be eligible to be sent to the technical instructional schools to qualify for specialist ratings and advancement, and should go to England for this purpose very shortly. After completion of courses they should be drafted, with the greatest advantage to themselves and to the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, to the battleships of the Atlantic Fleet, where they should remain until the oil burning cruiser relieving H.M.S. "Chatham" is ready to leave England.

A further larger number will be similarly qualified by the time the "Chatham" proceeds to England next year, and can then undergo their courses.

In this way the numbers required from the Royal Navy should in a few years be limited to the officers and senior petty officers required for manning the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy—that is, so far as the seamen and stoker branches are concerned.

It will be observed from the recruiting return embodied in Section V that entries in branches in which trade qualifications are required have been somewhat restricted. This is largely due to the fact that these men can command better wages ashore, but mainly because those who present themselves for entry fail to reach the high standard required by the Naval Service. To this high standard of technical training received by both officers and artificer and artisan ratings entering the Royal Navy can mainly be attributed the fact that defects of all ships on the station have been practically negligible, and have been made good at a minimum of expense (vide Section VI1). It would be most detrimental to efficiency to countenance any lowering of the accepted Royal Navy standard; and, since the New Zealand Division has not the resources for training these specialist ratings, we must continue to enter only those trained ashore who can pass the regulation tests, and make up the balance with men on loan from the Royal Navy.

IX. EXPENDITURE DURING LAST FINANCIAL YEAR.

Owing to the necessity for the strictest economy in all Departments there was practically no development in naval resources on the New Zealand Station during last financial year. The only expenditure incurred beyond the maintenance and upkeep of "Chatham" and "Philomel" and of the Devonport Base, entry and training of recruits, payment, victualling, &c., of personnel, and expenses of administration, was an item of £1,272 for the building of a gun-mounting shed at Devonport, Auckland.

The actual expenditure amounted to	£ 211,224
to which, for comparative purposes, should be added expenditure not brought to account within the financial year	17,226
and a sum appearing as a credit against the item "Remittances of ship's company pay, paid in England"	4,050
Total actual expenditure	£232,500

This last-mentioned item appears as a credit, owing to Admiralty claims not having been received for the amount paid by them on behalf of the New Zealand Government.

X. ESTIMATES FOR 1923-24.

Estimates for the current financial year have been, framed with the object of giving effect to the views expressed by the Admiralty as to the lines which, in their opinion, Dominion naval policy should follow. These views are recapitulated below under the headings given by the Admiralty, in the order of their importance, with a statement as to proposals for the current financial year.

(i) *"Maintenance of Nucleus of Sea-going Squadron capable of Expansion by Light Cruisers and Ocean-going Submarines."*—Slight expansion in personnel only is proposed, the recruiting policy being based on the substitution of the "Chatham" by an oil-burning light cruiser next year. These ships carry far fewer stokers but rather more seamen than cruisers of the "Chatham" class. During the past two years and a half the foundations have been laid with a view, as the financial position of the Dominion improves, to the gradual expansion of the sea-going squadron to the quota of three light cruisers, with attendant oil-tanker, and a unit of ocean-going submarines.

(ii) *"Provision of Oil Reserves in the Dominion."*—The Admiralty have emphasized the necessity for the provision of oil-fuel reserves in the Dominion, independent of commercial stocks, before oil-burning cruisers are sent to the South Pacific. An item of £12,000 has therefore been placed on the estimates for the erection of a 5,000-ton oil-tank at Devonport, as Auckland has proved to be eminently suitable as a repairing and storing base for a small squadron.

(iii) *"Assistance in equipping Empire Naval Bases."*—An early start is to be made in the development of the defences of Singapore at an eventual cost of about £10,000,000. New Zealand's share of contribution towards this Imperial work

should be regarded as approximately £200,000, and if the sum can be provided during this and the following year the Government will be clear of their commitment under this head by the year 1925, when, it is hoped, some expansion in the sea-going squadron maintained in these waters will be possible. When this takes place the annual maintenance charges will absorb the £100,000 which it is suggested should be contributed annually during this and next financial year for the equipment of Empire naval bases.

(iv) "*Provision of Bases, Docks, Depots, and Reserves of Stores and Fuel in New Zealand for War-vessels.*"—Items have been placed on the estimates for the improvement of the facilities of the existing base for repair work, &c., and of the "Philomel" and buildings attached thereto as a training and receiving depot. A further item of £5,000 has been inserted with a view to relieving the Imperial Government of the subsidy which they have been paying continuously since 1909 under agreement with the Auckland Harbour Board for the payment of £150,000 over a period of thirty years. (*Vide* Section VII, "Refits of H.M. Ships.")

As regards reserves of fuel, provision has been made for the continuance of the policy of maintaining emergency stocks of coal at Auckland and at Suva, Fiji.

(v) "*Provision for Local Protection of Trade, and Storage of Guns for Merchant Ships and their Escorts, and providing Trained Personnel for them.*"—During last year provision was made for the storage of guns as recommended, and a commencement was made with the recruitment and training of the necessary personnel by the entry of reservists (men). It is proposed during the current financial year to continue the enrolment and training of Reserve ratings, and to commence the entry of officers (*vide* Section VI).

(vi) "*Provision of Mobile Defence and Mine-sweeping Organization.*"—An item of £5,500 has been placed on the estimates for the purchase of guns for mobile local defence. This item should be continued for the next ten years until fifty such guns have been obtained for this purpose.

Until larger numbers have been enrolled in the Reserve it is not proposed to ask for money for the commencement of a mine-sweeping organization.

SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES, 1923-24.

New items of expenditure referred to above..	23,075
Additional cost falling on this year's estimates for passages, duplication of pay and allowances consequent on the relief of time-expired officers and men, and in sending men to England for courses (<i>vide</i> Section VIII)	55,900
Balance (<i>see</i> explanation below)	<u>259,724</u>
Total ..	<u>£338,699</u>

This sum of £259,724 is made up as follows :—

Expenditure not brought to account during last financial year (<i>vide</i> Section IX) ..	17,226
Item under "Full pay," due to introduction of new system of charging allotments	5,700
Maintenance and upkeep of "Chatham" and "Philomel" and of Devonport base; entry and training of recruits for Sea-going and Reserve Forces; payment, victualling, &c., of personnel; and expenses of administration ..	<u>236,798</u>
Total	<u>£259,724</u>

The slight increase in the estimated amount for the last-mentioned services (£236,798), and the actual expenditure on the same services during 1922-23 (£232,500), is principally on account of small increases in personnel, advancements in rating, &c. (mainly of locally entered recruits), and an augmentation of the Reserve.

In the current estimates the procedure previously followed of showing separately "outstanding Admiralty claims not yet brought to account" has been discontinued, and, except for two items in respect of the financial year 1920-21 still outstanding, the amounts have been included in the different items of the vote in the body of the naval estimates. The result is that certain items show an increase: this, however, is apparent and not actual. The change has been made with a view to simplifying the accountant-work involved. In framing the estimates of expenditure on services performed for the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy by the Admiralty it has been assumed that claims will only be presented and settled within the financial year for services performed during the first half of the year.

ALAN HOTHAM,

Commodore Commanding the New Zealand Station
and Naval Adviser to the New Zealand Government.