

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION, FOR THE PERIOD 1ST JULY 1923 TO 31st MARCH 1924

The Hon. the Minister of Defence.

H.M.S. "Chatham", 30th April, 1924

I have the honour to submit the following annual report in regard to the Naval Forces of the Dominion, covering the period 1st July, 1923, to 31st March, 1924.

I. PROCEEDINGS OF H.M.S."CHATHAM"

1. H.M.S. "Chatham" has continued to carry out her peace-time duties, which consist principally of: (a) affording seagoing training and experience to recruits who have completed their preliminary harbour courses in H.M.S. "Philomel," (b) drills and gunnery and torpedo exercises, to maintain efficiency, and (c) visits to ports of the Dominion, and to the islands in the South Pacific included within the limits of the New Zealand Station. Whenever the "Chatham" has called at ports in the Dominion every effort has been made to throw the ship open to visitors, and special arrangements have been made to enable as many school-children as possible to be conducted round the ship. In this latter connection I desire to record my most sincere gratitude to the various branches of the Navy League in New Zealand, who have taken endless trouble in organizing such visits, and whose kindness and generous hospitality to both officers and men of the Squadron are deeply appreciated.
2. In July, 1923, the "Chatham" was at Auckland, where she was docked at the end of that month. In August I relieved Commodore Alan Hotham, C.B., C.M.G., in the command of the station, and shortly after my arrival the "Chatham" proceeded on a cruise to the islands. This cruise was of great benefit in affording, to a number of officers and ratings who had recently joined, an opportunity to acquire knowledge of the ship. The District Intelligence Officer at Wellington (Paymaster Lieutenant-Commander J. T. V. Webster, D.S.O.) was on board the "Chatham" for a portion of the cruise, in order to enable him to obtain first-hand knowledge of certain of the islands. The ports visited were as follows; Sunday Island, Nukualofa, Apia, Pago Pago, Papeete, Rarotonga, Niue, Suva, and Lautoka. The ship was most hospitably received in all the ports visited, and arrived at Napier on the 6th November.
3. During this cruise gunnery and torpedo exercises were carried out on every available opportunity.
4. On leaving Napier the "Chatham" proceeded to Wellington, where the ship's company carried out their annual musketry course at the military camp at Trentham. This course is of great value in many ways, and I am very grateful to the military authorities for their courtesy in allowing the Navy the use of the range, and for their many kindnesses in connection with it.
5. The "Chatham" then proceeded to Auckland, and annual leave was given to the ship's company.
6. During January, 1924, exercises were carried out by "Chatham" and the two Imperial sloops (H.M. ships "Laburnum" and "Veronica") in the Hauraki Gulf, but these were to some extent hampered by the incidence of the coal strike. Towards the end of that month "Chatham" proceeded to Wellington, in order to be present at that port during the visit of the Japanese Training Squadron.
7. A visit was paid to Lyttelton during February, and "Chatham" then again returned to Wellington to meet H.M.A.S. "Melbourne," the flagship of the Royal Australian Navy, which was visiting New Zealand subsequent to the visit of H.M.S. "Chatham" to Australia in March, 1923. The two ships left Wellington together, and gunnery exercises were carried out in company. These exercises demonstrated once more the great benefit arising from a

common system of naval training, which enabled the two ships to work together in perfect harmony although belonging to totally different squadrons. On completion of practices the two ships parted company, and "Chatham" visited Picton, Akaroa, and Dunedin, returning to Auckland at the end of March, and being docked there preparatory to her passage to the East Indies Station after relief by H.M.S. "Dunedin."

8. The transfer between H.M. Ships "Chatham" and "Dunedin" will take place at Auckland, and the former ship is due to leave Auckland on the 27th May. Thirty-eight New Zealand entries, for courses of instruction in the various schools, are taking passage in her *en route* for England.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF H.M.S. "DUNEDIN."

9. H.M.S. "Dunedin" left England in November last, and joined the Special Service Squadron in the Indian Ocean. She then took part in a portion of the cruise of the Special Service Squadron en route to New Zealand, where she had been ordered to relieve H.M.S. "Chatham."

10. The new vessel is smaller than the "Chatham," though a far finer fighting unit, and employs a smaller number of men, the reduction being in the engine-room department, due to the "Dunedin" being an oil-burning vessel. The majority of officers and men of H.M.S. "Chatham" will be transferred to H.M.S. "Dunedin," but an innovation has been made in the latter ship, as she has a detachment of Royal Marines, none of whom have up to the present been attached to the New Zealand Division. I feel confident that the introduction of a detachment of this splendid corps into the division will be of great benefit.

III. H.M.S. "PHILOMEL."

11. H.M.S. "Philomel" has continued her duties as harbour training-ship and depot-ship at Auckland. I am gratified with the state of the ship, and the local grounds and buildings under the control of Commander Miles. The training of recruits in the "Philomel" is carried out in an exemplary fashion, and it reflects credit on all concerned.

12. During the twelve months ended 31st March, 1924, twelve seamen recruits, seventeen stoker and eight other ratings have completed their harbour training, and have been drafted to the sea-going cruiser where the remainder of the training is carried out.

13. Owing to the age of H.M.S. "Philomel," and the fact that the training of recruits has necessitated the erection of various covered-in spaces on her upper deck, the Cabinet approved the suggestion for the removal of her propelling-machinery, thus reducing the amount of work necessary for its upkeep and increasing the space available for instruction. The work of removal is being performed by the ship's staff as opportunity offers, and it is estimated that the net credit to the naval defence vote from the sale of old material will be £2,500.

IV. NAVY OFFICE.

14. Captain H. D. Hamilton was relieved as Chief Staff Officer at the Navy Office in February, 1924, by Captain F. A. Sommerville, D.S.O. Captain Hamilton's services and technical knowledge were of great value to the Dominion during the two years for which he held the appointment. Paymaster-Commander J. Siddalls, O.B.E., Naval Secretary, was relieved in September, 1923, by Paymaster-Commander R. Butcher, C.M.G., M.V.O.; the former officer had performed most valuable service during a period of nearly three years.

15. The Navy Office was moved in December, 1923, from Harcourt's Building, in Lambton Quay, to the Customs Buildings, Waterloo Quay. The new offices are far more convenient, and the new location is admirable; the main advantages are that there is ample space, they are in a Government building, and the cost is slightly less.

V. BASE AT AUCKLAND.

16. The development of the small refitting and storing base at Devonport, Auckland, has been continued, and a clothing-store and kitting-up room for new entries have been erected. The emergency sick-quarters have been completed by the installation of heating-apparatus and some minor alterations. The inflammable store has been moved to a more suitable position. A considerable improvement has been made in the recreation-grounds, which are so essential a part of the base ; the grounds have been of great benefit to the recruits and the ships' companies of H.M. ships at Auckland.

17. It was intended that a tank for the storage of oil fuel should have been completed during the last financial year, but this has been rendered impossible by the delay in obtaining tenders, &c. The contract for the tank is signed, and the material should soon arrive at Auckland, together with the necessary fittings. The erection of the tank will be undertaken by the Public Works Department.

18. In order to provide an ample supply of oil fuel in the Dominion, independent of commercial stocks, and to meet the Imperial oil-fuel requirements, it is proposed to erect a second oil-fuel tank, and provision for this has been inserted in the estimates for 1924-25.

19. In order that there should be room for the second oil-fuel tank, and for expansion in other directions in the future, a portion of land which was for sale adjoining the recreation-ground was taken for defence purposes under the Public Works Act, 1908.

20. All defects and alterations and additions to H.M. ships have been made good by ships' labour with the resources of the Auckland Harbour Board's workshops attached to the Calliope Dock at Devonport. The subsidy of £5,000 a year hitherto paid by the Admiralty is now paid by the New Zealand Government, and this ensures H.M. ships priority use of the dock and workshops. This arrangement is most economical, and the repairs to H.M. ships are carried out at a cost of (a) the material actually used, (b) the actual out-of-pocket expenses of the Auckland Harbour Board while ships are in dock, and (c) a proportion of the £5,000 referred to above. (See paragraphs 34, 35, and 36.)

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

21. These two vessels are maintained on the station by the British Government, and their duties mainly consist of visiting the South Pacific islands and ports in New Zealand.

22. H.M.S. "Laburnum" left Auckland in May, 1923, and visited the following islands: Fiji, Phoenix Group, Union Islands, Western and American Samoa, Rarotonga, Society Group, Penrhyn Island, Niue, and Tonga Group, returning to Auckland in October. Since then she has visited Gisborne, Napier, Lyttelton, Akaroa, and Timaru, has carried out musketry practice in Wellington and other exercises in the Hauraki Gulf. In January she was despatched by me to East Cape to render any assistance possible to the s.s. "Port Elliot," but her services were not required.

23. Commander G.P. Sherston was relieved in command of "Laburnum" in September, 1923 by Commander S.K. Smyth.

21. H.M.S. "Veronica" was absent from New Zealand from April to the end of September, 1923, during which period she visited the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and the Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji Groups. In October and November she was refitted and her ship's company carried out musketry practice at Auckland, since which she has visited ports in the vicinity of Auckland, New Plymouth, Wanganui, and Nelson.

25. "Laburnum" and "Veronica" will shortly leave for cruises in the Islands. "Laburnum" has recently been recommissioned and a considerable proportion of the old crew sent to England. "Veronica" will recommission early in May.

VII. RECRUITING FOR THE SEAGOING FORCES.

26. The following table shows the numbers finally entered during the period 1st April, 1923, to 31st March, 1924 :—

Regimental District	Ordinary Seamen and Boys.	Stokers.	Artificers and Artisans.	Cooks and Stewards.	Other Ratings.	Total.
Auckland	18	2	3	4	2	29
Paeroa	4	..	..	..	..	4
Whangarei	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hamilton	2	1	..	1	..	4
Wellington	4	3	1	..	1	9
Palmerston North	9	..	1	1	1	12
Napier	8	2	..	..	..	10
Hawera	2	3	..	..	1	6
Nelson	1	..	..	..	.	1
Christchurch	1	..	..	1	..	2
Dunedin	1	..	..	..	..	1
Invercargill	..	..	..	..	..	..
Re-entries from United Kingdom	..	..	2	..	..	2
Totals	50	11	7	7	5	80

27. The following table shows the numbers discharged or dismissed during the period 1st April 1923, to 31st March, 1924, after final entry:-

Cause.	Able Seamen, Ordinary Seamen, and Boys	Stokers.	Other Ratings.	Total.
Services no longer required, unsuitable, dismissed as a punishment-	1	..	3	4
Desertion.	..	..	4	9
Invalided	7	..	2	9
By purchase	5	..	3	8
Totals	18	..	12	30

This loss is a percentage of 37.5 of the numbers entered during the period.

28. Recruiting for stokers has been suspended since October, 1923. At present only boys are required as recruits.

29. Recruiting for the New Zealand Division is progressing but slowly, and arrangements have been made by which a Naval Recruiter (pensioner Master-at-Arms) will shortly tour the Dominion as an experiment. Coloured posters will be displayed, and booklets on "How to join the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy" will, by the courtesy of the Post Office Department, be available in all post-offices. These steps, together with the visit of the Special Service Squadron, will, it is hoped, result in a larger number of recruits being obtained,

30. I hold a very high opinion of the qualities displayed by the recruits entered in New Zealand, and have no doubt whatever that this Dominion will, in time, provide a personnel second to none in discipline, efficiency, and *esprit de corps*. The men are keen, of fine physique, exemplary behaviour, and take a pride in their ship and in their work.

VIII. NEW ZEALAND ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE

31. In October, 1922, enrolment of men in the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve was begun, but the numbers entered have been small. The details of those entering during the period 1st April, 1923, to 31st March, 1924, are:—

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	33 seaman ratings 4 signal and W/T ratings 31 engine-room and stoker ratings 1 armourer's crew 1 plumber <u>10</u> steward and cook ratings 80
Class A. (Active)—Men who have served in the Royal Navy or any Dominion Navy	8 seaman ratings 2 signal and WE/T ratings 7 engine-room and stoker ratings 1 joiner 1 master-at-arms <u>1</u> officers' steward 20
Class B—Men who follow the sea as a profession in the mercantile marine or steam fishing vessels	5 seaman ratings
Class C—Men ineligible for entry an Classes A and B	6 seaman ratings 5 stoker ratings 18 telegraphist ratings 3 writer ratings <u>1</u> supply assistant 33
Total	138

32. 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.

33. It is hoped within the next few months, to obtain sanction for the necessary regulations to govern the enrolment of officers in the Reserve, and then to commence the entry of such numbers as will be required for auxiliary services in time of war.

IX. REFITS OF H.M. SHIPS.

34. H.M.S. "Chatham" has now been nearly four years without refit at a naval dockyard. I consider this reflects great credit on those responsible both in the ship and in the Naval Base. The "Chatham" has been docked before proceeding to the East Indies Station.

35. H.M.S. "Philomel" was docked in March, 1924, and should be fit to carry out the duties of depot-ship for many years. It is probable, however, that as numbers of recruits increase, a small depot will be required as an ancillary, the accommodation provided by "Philomel" being insufficient for any large number of men. As stated in paragraph 13, she can no longer be considered as a seagoing vessel.

36. The "Laburnum" and "Veronica" have both been docked and refitted during the period under review, and I consider that the Admiralty should be very satisfied with the small cost involved.

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

37. Of the officers and men who originally commissioned the "Chatham" in October, 1920, for service in that ship and H.M.S. "Philomel," six officers and 108 ratings volunteered to serve for a period of one year beyond the original three years; some of these will be sent Home in "Chatham." Fifteen officers and 142 ratings were sent Home on relief in June, 1923, and, in August, 1923, sixty-eight ratings took their discharge in New Zealand, their reliefs having arrived from England ; these sixty-eight all automatically joined the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve.

38. In September, 1923, nineteen locally entered ratings were discharged to England to undergo courses of instruction in the gunnery, torpedo, signal, and other schools. The reports received as to the progress of these men are highly gratifying, and show that the early instruction given in the Dominion is on the right line. Before leaving England toward the end of 1921 they will have gained seagoing experience in a large fleet, and this will be of great and lasting benefit. It is proposed to send a further number of thirteen seamen and twenty-five stokers in the "Chatham" for similar training at Horne, and service in the Atlantic or other fleet.

39. It is my considered opinion that the best procedure as regards ratings entered in New Zealand is for them to undergo preliminary training locally, and then to send to England all who can be recommended for specialist courses. This method possesses many advantages. It ensures that the men receive up-to-date training as taught in accordance with the latest ideas obtaining in the British Fleet and the schools at Home; it enables them to gain acquaintance with all phases of naval life; whilst the contact and comradeship with petty officers and men of the Fleet in Home waters and at the schools enables them instinctively to absorb the traditions and esprit de corps of the British Navy. At first sight it may appear that the cost entailed by sending men to England is an extravagance ; but the expense is small in comparison to the alternative of establishing and maintaining schools of instruction in New Zealand ; and even were this latter, course adopted, the instruction imparted could not compare with that which can be given to the men in England.

XI. EXPENDITURE DURING LAST FINANCIAL YEAR.

40. The sum voted for naval defence for 1923-24, and the amounts expended, were as follows:

Item.	Voted. £	Expended £
(1) Full pay and wages, extra pay, &c.	154,400	133,480
(2) Administration	600	14,960
(3) Victualling, clothing, and mess-traps	33,575	34,431
(4) Medical services	1,300	1,511
(5) Repairs, docking, &c.	8,225	6,302
(6) Fuel and lighting	40,670	3,269
(7) Stores	34,500	28,630
(8) Works	12,800	651
(9) Reserves	2,000	738
(10) Effective services	33,209	29,746
(11) Non-effective services	27,975	27,011
(12) Contingencies and claims from Admiralty	3,363	5,024
Gross total	352,617	315,753
Less estimated credits	13,220	30,030
Net total	339,397	285,723

41. The following notes explain shortly the differences referred to in the previous paragraph:—

Item (1): Allotments to the amount of approximately £20,000 have not been claimed by Admiralty.

Item. (2): Remittances have been credited to Suspense Account by Treasury, but have been charged to Naval Defence vote.

Item (3): Credits in aid were estimated, but these were not allowed. The victualling allowance was not reduced as much as was expected.

Item (4): Treatment ashore was heavier and purchase of stores was larger than estimate.

Item (5): Refit of "Chatham" was postponed, and that of "Philomel" less expensive than anticipated.

Item. (6): Coal stocks were not completed owing to coal strike.

Item (7): Sum of 15,500 not expended on guns.

Item (8): No expenditure on oil-fuel tank, for which £12,000 was voted.

Item (9): Numbers entered were less than estimated.

Item (10): Travelling-expenses and passages amounted to £2,500 less than the estimate.

Item (12): Contingencies recoverable from Admiralty debited to this item £1,700 more than estimate.

XII. ESTIMATES FOR 1924-25.

42. 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.

43. These views are recapitulated below under the headings given by the Admiralty, in the order of their importance, with a statement as to the proposals for the current financial year.

(i) *"Maintenance of Nucleus of Seagoing Squadron capable of Expansion by Light Cruisers and Ocean-going Submarines."*—Owing to the complement of H.M.S. "Dunedin" being smaller than that of H.M.S. "Chatham," the numbers of officers and men to be borne this year are less than for the previous year. No provision has been made for the entry and training of the young men who will be required eventually for manning the second and third light cruisers. It is earnestly hoped that as soon as the financial position of the Dominion renders it possible a second light cruiser of the "D" class will be added to the squadron, and eventually a third.

The importance of the provision of a second light cruiser at the earliest possible moment cannot be overestimated. Quite apart from Imperial considerations, with one light cruiser only there is an entire lack of competition, except on the rare occasions of a visit being paid to Australia, or a ship of the Australian Navy visiting New Zealand waters. Competition is the keystone of efficiency, and however good the personnel of an individual ship may be it is impossible to maintain the highest possible standard without competition with at least one other ship of the same or a similar class. For the peace-time needs of the station, embracing as it does a very large area, including a considerable number of islands in the South Pacific, it is highly desirable that another ship should be provided to enable the various ports to be visited more frequently. It is not contemplated that a submarine flotilla should be established in New Zealand waters for the present.

(ii) *"Provision of Oil Reserves in the Dominion."*—As stated in paragraphs 17 and 18, provision has been made for two oil-fuel tanks, both of which it is hoped will be completed during this financial year. One of these tanks was approved for 1923-24, but no money was spent on it. The provision of these two tanks and the tank-vessel should be sufficient to meet the naval needs of the Dominion.

(iii) *"Assistance in equipping Empire Naval Bases."*—The recent decision of the Imperial Government to incur no further expenditure on the projected Naval Base at Singapore makes it unnecessary for New Zealand to contribute any sum for this purpose at present.

(iv) *"Provision of Bases, Docks, Depots, and Reserves of Stores and Fuel for War-vessels."*—The sum of £500 has been inserted in the naval defence estimates for 1924-25 for the purchase of land at Devonport, Auckland, for defence purposes; the actual cost of the transaction involved is at present not known by me. This land adjoins the existing Government property, and will be used for the second oil-fuel tank, and for any further expansion in store-houses, &c., which may be found necessary in the future.

Emergency stocks of coal will be maintained. at. Auckland, and at Suva, Fiji, for the use of H.M. sloops, but this is not a charge upon the Government of New Zealand.

(v) *"Provision of Local Protection of Trade and Storage of Guns for Merchant Ships and their Escort, and providing Trained Personnel for them."*—The entries in the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve have been disappointing, but it is hoped they will increase. It is proposed to begin this year the entry of officers into the Royal Naval Reserve (see paragraph 33).

(vi) *"Provision of Mobile Defence and Mine-sweeping Organization."*—It is proposed to purchase guns for patrol vessels during the financial year 1924-25, and to continue this until a sufficient number of guns has been obtained. It is also proposed to obtain a small amount of mine-sweeping gear for use should an emergency arise.

XIII. SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES, 1924-25.

43. The estimates for the naval defence vote for 1924-25 amount to approximately the same sum as was voted for 1923-24, being £330,465 (net), as compared with £339,397 (net).

44. The following table and notes show the differences between the amounts voted for 1923-21 and the estimated expenditure for 1924-25: —

Item.	Estimates 1924-25 £	Amount voted, 1923-24 £
(1) Full pay, wages, and extra pay	133,400	154,400
(2) Administration	9,400	600
(3) Victualling, clothing, and mess-traps	28,475	33,575
(4) Medical services	1,650	1,300
(5) Repairs, docking, etc	11,100	8,225
(6) Fuel and lighting	61,170	40,670
(7) Stores	41,000	34,500
(8) Works	24,850	12,800
(9) Reserves	4,000	2,000
(10) Effective services	12,727	33,209
(11) Non-effective services	26,370	37,975
(12) Contingencies and claims from Admiralty	2,000	3,363
Gross total	356,142	352,617
Credits	25,677	13,220
Net total	330,465	339,397

45. The following notes explain shortly the differences referred to in the previous paragraph:--

(1.) "Dunedin" has smaller complement.

- (2.) Cost of remittances from ships charged to this item.
- (3.) Less ratings and smaller victualling-allowance.
- (4.) Payment for stores purchased from military surplus stocks.
- (5.) One extra refit.
- (6.) Hire and upkeep of oiler. Fuel used by "Dunedin" on passage out.
- (7.) Additional guns for local defence vessels.
- (8.) One oil-tank approved for 1923-24 and one additional.
- (9.) Inauguration of Reserve of Officers.
- (10.) Passages reduced by £21,000.
- (12.) Claims from Admiralty less than 1923-24.

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