

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION, FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 1927 TO 31st MARCH 1928

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency the Governor-General

REPORT

The Hon. the Minister of Defence, Wellington.

H.M.S. "Dunedin", at Auckland, N.Z., 20th June, 1928.

SIR, –

I have the honour to address to you the following report on the Naval Forces of the Dominion and the proceedings on the New Zealand Station during the year 1st April, 1927, to 31st March, 1928.

I. STATE.

The following is the present composition of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy : H.M.S. "Dunedin" (broad pendant of Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station), H.M.S. "Diomede," H.M.S. "Philomel" (non-seagoing depot-ship and training establishment at Devonport, Auckland), H.M. Trawler "Wakakura," Oiler "Nucula." H.M. Ships "Laburnum" and "Veronica" are also employed on the Station under the Commodore Commanding, but at the expense of the Imperial Government.

H.M.S. "Diomede" has been sent to England for refit and to recommission. She is expected to rejoin the Squadron at the end of October, after an absence of less than six months from the Station.

II. PERSONNEL.

There are at present 351 active-service ratings who have been recruited in New Zealand serving in the New Zealand Division.

2. Recruiting for the New Zealand Division has continued to be satisfactory. During the year forty-seven seamen boys, nine stokers, and eight miscellaneous ratings have been entered in New Zealand. So far as seamen boys and stokers are concerned there is no shortage of applicants and it is possible to select the best. The number of artisan and artificer candidates is, however, not so satisfactory, and there is inclined to be an insufficiency of competent and experienced workmen. This is doubtless due to the opportunities which are open to skilled men on shore. The following table shows the districts from which the new entries were recruited :—

Regimental District	Seamen	Stokers.	Artisans, &.	Total.
Auckland	17	2	2	21
Paeroa	2	..	1	3
Whangarei	1	..	..	1
Hamilton	7	..	1	8
Wellington	4	2	2	8
Palmerston North	..	1	1	2

Napier	5	1	..	6
Hawera	2	1	1	4
Nelson	1	..	..	1
Christchurch	7	2	..	9
Dunedin	1	..	..	1
Invercargill	..	...	..	..
Totals	47	9	8	64

3. The following table shows the numbers discharged or dismissed after final entry during the period of this report. It is satisfactory to note that the number of desertions has decreased since my last report, and that the total number of ratings lost from the Division is very much smaller than last year:—

Cause.	Seamen	Stokers.	Others.	Total.
Services no longer required, dismissed as a punishment, unsuitable	5	4	1	10
By desertion.	4	1	4	5
Invalided	1	..	1	2
Purchase	1	..	..	1
Death	1	..	..	1
Totals	12	5	2	19

4. During the year twenty-two ratings of various classes have been sent to England for specialist courses in the Imperial training establishments, to be followed in most cases by a period of seagoing training in battleships of the Fleet. During the refit of cruisers at Home every effort is made to release as many of the New Zealand men as possible from ship duties in order to enable them to go through short courses of instruction at the naval technical schools, as this instruction cannot be given on the station. The importance of these courses cannot *be* appraised too highly, and the results are extremely satisfactory.

5. The health and discipline of the ships' companies have been excellent.

III. THE NAVAL BASE.

Considerable progress has been made in the Naval Base since my last report. New recreation-rooms have been built for the ships' companies, and a new boat-slip provided, and a boat-shed and Paymaster's store have also been erected.

2. The magazines at Takapuna are complete, and all the reserve ammunition for the station is now stored there. The opinions expressed in my last report as to the advantages of this magazine have been fully borne out by the experience so far gained.

IV. RESERVES.

The following is the state of the New Zealand Royal Naval Reserve:—

Officers, R.N.R..	9
Officers, R.N.V.R...	36

Men, R.N.R.—

Class A. (Active)—Men who have served in the Royal Navy or any Dominion Navy and who come up for periodical training	82
Class A. (Inactive)—Men who have been discharged from the seagoing Forces in New Zealand, other than those joining Class A (Active). These men are liable to be called up for naval service in the event of war within ten years of discharge from the seagoing Forces if not then over forty years of age	134
Class B—Men who follow the sea as a profession in the mercantile marine or steam fishing vessels	15
Class C—Men ineligible for Classes A or B	82
Class D—As for Class C, but only eligible to join when a division is formed in any district where they may be living	175

2. The number of men joining Class B is very disappointing, but further proposals are now being considered for augmenting this class.

3. Some three years ago it was decided to establish a division of Class D of the Reserve at Auckland, where the conditions were peculiarly favourable, in order to ascertain whether it was possible to organize a system of training by which youths might be trained to be of some real value for local naval defence in the case of war. This experiment has proved so successful that it has been decided to establish additional divisions in the other three main centres, and the necessary steps have been taken to commence recruiting for the first subdivision of each division in Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin at an early date.

4. In November, 1927, Captain J. R. Middleton, D.S.O., R.N. (retired), was appointed Director of Royal Naval Reserves. He will also be responsible to the Naval Board for organizing a system of local naval defence for New Zealand.

V. PROCEEDINGS.

(a) *H.M.S. "Dunedin."*

H.M.S. "Dunedin," on completion of her refit in England and exchange of the loan personnel, left Chatham on the 9th June, 1927, and after calling at Bermuda, Jamaica, Panama, the Marquesas, and Tahiti, arrived at Auckland on 3rd August, where she remained, giving leave to New Zealand ratings until 20th August, 1927. After carrying out gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Hauraki Gulf she left for a cruise to the South Island on 12th September, calling at Paterson Inlet, Dunedin, Timaru, and thence proceeding to Auckland, arriving 11th October. On 11th October, 1927, Captain L. V. Wells, D.S.O., R.N., relieved Captain J. S. M. Ritchie, R.N., in command.

2. On 17th October H.M.S. "Dunedin" rejoined H.M.S. "Diomedes" off Lyttelton, and in company with her carried out gunnery and torpedo exercises from Akaroa, after completion of which both ships arrived at Wellington, 20th October, 1927.

3. On 25th October, 1927, I transferred my broad pendant to H.M.S. "Dunedin," and Captain Wells took command of H.M.S. "Diomedes."

4. While at Wellington the ship's company carried out the annual musketry course at Trentham.

5. On 23rd November, 1927, H.M.S. "Dunedin," with H.M.S. "Diomedes" in company, sailed for Auckland, exercises being carried out *en route*, and again in the Hauraki Gulf from 28th November to 8th December. Christmas leave was given on return to Auckland on completion of exercises.

6. On 12th January, 1928, H.M.S. "Dunedin" proceeded to sea to search for the airmen missing in attempting the trans-Tasman flight, returning again on 16th January.

7. Exercises in the Hauraki Gulf and combined landing operations at Waiwera were carried out from 19th to 26th January, after which H.M.S. "Dunedin" proceeded to Whangaroa, returning thence to Auckland on 4th February.

8. On 16th February, 1928, H.M.S. "Dunedin" sailed from Auckland for a cruise round the coasts of the Dominion, but on the 17th orders were received from the Government to proceed with "Diomedes" to Samoa. "Dunedin," with "Diomedes" in company, arrived Apia 21st February. On 23rd February armed forces from both ships were landed. On 9th March I proceeded to Wellington in "Dunedin" to report to the New Zealand Government on the situation in Samoa. The Royal Marine detachment remained behind in Samoa until relieved by a Police Force. "Dunedin" arrived Wellington on 16th March.

(B) *H.M.S. "Diomedes."*

H.M.S. "Diomedes," under my command and wearing my broad pendant, sailed from Auckland for Suva on 31st March, 1927, where His Excellency the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and the New Hebrides Commission were embarked. Vila, Bushman's Bay in Malekula Island, Tangoa and Hog Harbour in Espiritu Santo Island, and the Island of Tanna were visited, and the ship returned to Suva on 21st April, when His Excellency and the Commission disembarked.

2. On 27th April H.M.S. "Diomedes" arrived at Auckland, and remained till 23rd May, from which date until 2nd June gunnery and torpedo exercises were carried out in the Hauraki Gulf.

3. On the 14th June a cruise to the South Pacific islands was commenced, during which the following places were visited : Aitutaki, Bora Bora, Papeete, Moorea, Caroline Island, Penrhyn, Rakahanga, Manahiki, Suvarov, Nassau, Puka Puka, Apia, Pago Pago, Suva, and Nukualofa. On return to Auckland on 16th August annual docking and refit were taken in hand, and on completion on 30th August a cruise was made to the South Island, where Dunedin, Lyttelton, and Akaroa were visited. From the latter port combined exercises with "Dunedin" were carried out, and both ships arrived Wellington on 20th October.

4. On 25th October, 1927, I transferred my broad pendant to H.M.S. "Dunedin," and Captain L. V. Wells, D.S.O., assumed command of H.M.S. "Diomedes."

5. While at Wellington the ship's company carried out the annual musketry course at Trentham.

6. On 23rd November "Diomedes," in company with "Dunedin," sailed for Auckland. Exercises were carried out *en route*, and again from 28th November to 8th December in the Hauraki Gulf. On return to Auckland Christmas leave was given.

7. On 13th January, 1928, the ship left Auckland to join "Dunedin" in the search for the airmen who were missing in attempting the trans-Tasman flight, returning again on 16th January.

8. Exercises in the Hauraki Gulf and combined landing operations at Waiwera were carried out from 19th to 26th January,

9. After this period "Diomedes" visited Russell, Gisborne, and Napier. On 17th February, while at the latter port, the ship was ordered to rendezvous at sea with "Dunedin," and thence proceed to Samoa, where both ships arrived on 21st February. On 23rd February armed forces from both ships were landed. On 17th March "Diomedes" sailed for Suva and thence to Auckland, arriving at the latter port on 2nd April. The Royal Marine detachment remained behind in Samoa until relieved by a Police Force.

(C) *H.M. Trawler "Wakakura."*

On 7th May, 1927, H.M.T. "Wakakura," under the command of Commissioned Gunner H. Melville, R.N., having had her defects completed and made ready for sea service, embarked the first batch of two officers and twenty men of the Auckland Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and proceeded to the Hauraki Gulf for a week's training.

2. Since May, 1927, H.M.T. "Wakakura" has been employed in the training of Reservists, and in towing targets for the ships of the New Zealand Squadron while exercising in the Hauraki Gulf. She has proved of the utmost value in giving practical seagoing experience to officers and men of Class D, Royal Naval Reserve, Auckland Division, which cannot be obtained in a seagoing cruiser. It enables the compulsory training to be carried out by those men who cannot get away from their occupations to go out for fourteen days in the cruisers, and thus ensures that Royal Naval Reserve men, Class D, get seagoing experience. This is in addition to her primary function of instructional ship for mine-sweeping. The number of Reserve personnel that has been out in her for a week's training during the year is 12 officers and 147 men.

3. On 11th November, 1927, Commissioned Gunner H. F. Edwards, R.N., took over the command from Commissioned Gunner H. Melville, R.N.

4. H.M.T. "Wakakura" was, in February, 1928, of great value in sweeping with the sloops the area where the s.s. "Northumberland" was stated to have struck a rock.

5. It will be difficult for H.M.T. "Wakakura" alone to cope with the training of the Wellington, Otago, and Canterbury Royal Naval Reserve, Class D, Divisions, and it will be necessary in the near future to make provision for other vessels. These would also form the nucleus of a Mine-sweeping Service, and enable a thorough system of mine-sweeping instruction to be carried out throughout the Dominion.

(D) *H.M.S. "Philomel."*

The training of recruits and the depot-ship's work carried out in H.M.S. "Philomel" has continued very satisfactorily under the command of Commander F. C. Bradley, R.N.

2. I consider that H.M.S. "Philomel" is unsuitable as a training-ship owing to her age, and that she should be replaced by a shore establishment as soon as practicable, and plans for this are under consideration.

3. The Depot personnel have been fully employed in the refit of the ships of the New Zealand Squadron, and in the development and improvement of the facilities of the Naval Base.

(E) *R.F.A. "Nucula."*

During the year "Nucula" has been employed bringing oil fuel from San Pedro, California, to Auckland for the naval oil-fuel tanks and for H.M. Ships. Her importance was emphasized recently in the Samoan operations. The cruisers would have been unable to proceed to Samoa and remain in Samoan waters had no oiler been available to complete them with fuel while there.

2. During the periods when her services have not been required for lifting cargoes or fuelling the cruisers she has been paid off to save expense.

(F) *H.M. Sloops.*

H.M. Sloops "Laburnum" (Commander C. E. Brooke, R.N.) and "Veronica" (Commander R. H. F. De Salis, D.S.C., R.N.) visited ports on the coasts of New Zealand in April, 1927, and in May docked in Calliope Dock for half-yearly docking.

2: From May onwards both ships carried out very extensive cruises in the South Pacific islands, returning to Auckland in October to refit.

3. On 27th October, 1927, Commander F. N. Attwood, R.N., relieved Commander C. E. Brooke, R.N., in command of H.M.S. "Laburnum."

4. On completion of their refits in November and December both sloops proceeded for cruises to New Zealand ports, arriving at Wellington in March, 1928, where the annual musketry course was carried out at Trentham.

VI. VISITS OF WARSHIPS TO THE DOMINION.

The French Sloop " Cassiopee " visited New Zealand ports from 9th March to 14th April, 1928.

VII. DRILLS AND EXERCISES.

Every opportunity has been taken of carrying out gunnery, torpedo, and tactical exercises. These have included a competitive efficiency test between the cruisers, and landing operations carried out at Waiwera in which all seagoing ships of the squadron took part. It is hoped that in the future combined operations with the army may be possible.

I have, &c.,

G. T. C. P. SWABEY,

1st Naval Member and Commodore Commanding
New Zealand Station.