

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES  
REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION,  
FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 1930 TO 31st MARCH 1931

*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. "Diomede", at Moorea, 20th July, 1931.

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, 1930, to 31st March, 1931.

I. STATE.

The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy on 31st March, 1931, consisted of :—

H.M.S. "Diomede" (broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding the New Zealand Station), H.M.S. "Dunedin" (on passage to England to undergo large repairs); H.M.S. "Philomel" (non-seagoing depot ship and training establishment at Devonport, Auckland), H.M. Trawler Wakakura," and R.F.A. "Nucula."

2. H.M. Ships "Veronica" and "Laburnum" are also employed on the Station under the orders the Commodore Commanding, but at the expense of the Imperial Government.

II. PERSONNEL.

On 18th September, 1930, Commander Horace L. Morgan, D.S.O., Royal Navy, relieved Commander Gerard W. T. Robertson, Royal Navy, in command of H.M.S. "Veronica."

2. Lieutenant-Commander William H. Bremner, D.S.O., D.S.C., Royal Navy, relieved Lieutenant-Commander Cyril J. M. Lang, Royal Navy, on the 8th October, 1930, as Staff Officer (Operations and Intelligence) and Staff Officer (Intelligence) at the Navy Office, Wellington.

3. Captain Martin J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy, recommissioned H.M.S. "Diomede" at Chatham on 16th October, 1930, for further service on the New Zealand Station after completing large repairs.

4. At the end of January, 1931, while at Auckland, a partial reorganization of personnel between "Dunedin," and "Philomel" took place, and a final one between "Diomede" and "Dunedin" at Russell on 25th February. This was necessary as the result of the return of H.M.S. "Diomede" to the Station with a large number of new loan Imperial officers and men on board, also owing to the impending return of H.M.S. "Dunedin" to England with time-expired Imperial officers and men, New Zealand ratings due for training and certain ratings who were required to complete her complement while on passage home.

5. On 20th February, 1931, Commander Edward L. Berthon, D.S.C., Royal Navy, relieved Commander Nelson Clover, Royal Navy, in command of H.M.S. "Philomel," Naval Officer in Charge Auckland, and as Superintendent of Training and Director of Recruiting.

6. On Thursday, 26th February, 1931, Captain Martin J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy, succeeded me in command of H.M.S. "Dunedin," and I transferred my broad pendant to H.M.S. "Diomedé."

7. On the concluding day of this report there were 382 ratings on the active list who had been recruited in New Zealand; of these 292 were serving in ships of the New Zealand Division on the Station; eighty-six were in H.M.S. "Dunedin" on passage to England (forty-one to undergo courses and forty-five to serve in ships of the Imperial Navy in Home waters while awaiting the return of "Dunedin" to New Zealand), and four were already in England undergoing courses, &c.

8. In anticipation of requirements of men when the two cruisers will again be on the Station, recruiting was reopened during the year and eight stokers and one assistant cook were entered in September, 1930, and fifteen seamen boys during January, 1931.

9. The total wastage caused by invaliding, desertion, discharge by purchase, death, unsuitability, services no longer required, during the year was twenty-three.

10. The health and discipline of the ships' companies have continued to be satisfactory.

### III. NAVAL BASE.

The improvements mentioned in my last report have continued, and the general appearance of the Base is now very good. Credit for this is largely due to Commander Nelson Clover, Royal Navy, the late Naval Officer in Charge, who carried out his duties with great zeal and keenness.

2. The extension of the gun-mounting store has been completed, and a great improvement results. All mountings now stand separately, which greatly facilitates inspection.

The building erected at the rear of this store for messing and washing accommodation for base civil staff fully justifies the small expenditure involved.

3. New dockyard lavatories have been built in collaboration with the Auckland Harbour Board. They are very satisfactory.

4. The question of supplying electric power to ships when lying alongside at Sheerlegs Jetty, referred to in my last report, is still under consideration.

5. Due to financial stringency, it was decided to postpone the building of the naval barracks.

6. The three new magazines at Fort Takapuna referred to in my last report are in regular use, and are satisfactory.

The office for the Armament Supply Officer allowed for in the estimates has been completed, and adds to the efficiency of the Armament Depot.

New ventilators have been fitted to all magazines and are successful in preventing the accumulation of damp and improving the air-supply to the magazine.

A few minor improvements have been made by the Armament Supply Officer, and I should again like to state that the efficient running of the establishment at Fort Takapuna reflects great credit on this officer (Lieutenant H. A. Haynes, RN. (retired) ) and his small staff.

#### IV. RESERVES.

The total strength of the New Zealand Naval Reserves on 31st March, 1931, was—

Royal Naval Reserve—

Officers	7
Men	295

Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve—

Officers	77
Men	558

2. The training of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve has continued throughout the year. Nine sections from the Auckland Division, five from the Wellington Division, five from the Otago Division, and three from the Canterbury Division have each been embarked in H.M. Trawler "Wakakura" for a week's training in mine-sweeping, gunnery, signalling, navigation, and seamanship. In addition, a certain number have carried out training in H.M. ships "Dunedin" & "Diomedea." The latter ships also embarked from time to time Royal Naval Reserves and Fleet Reserves for annual training.

3. I carried out inspections of all four divisions and their headquarters during the year and consider that their efficiency is being well maintained.

4. The Wellington Division took part in the Anzac Day ceremonies. The appearance and marching of the men were very good and reflected great credit on all concerned.

#### V. PROCEEDINGS.

(A) *H.M. Ships "Dunedin," "Diomedea," "Veronica," "Laburnum."*

During April and May, 1930, H.M.S. "Dunedin" (wearing my broad pendant) was refitting at Auckland after her return from operations in Western Samoa.

2. The Imperial sloops "Veronica" (Commander Gerard W. T. Robertson, Royal Navy) and "Laburnum" (Commander Charles E. Hotham, D.S.C., Royal Navy) carried out their annual musketry course at Wellington during April, and took part in the Anzac Day ceremonies there. They returned to Auckland at the end of the month to dock and refit in preparation for their annual cruise in the Pacific Islands.

3. His Majesty the King's Birthday, 3rd June, was celebrated in Auckland by all ships in the Squadron dressing overall and firing a Royal Salute of twenty-one guns.

4. H.M.S. "Dunedin" carried out routine gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Hauraki Gulf with H.M.S. "Laburnum" from 6th to 21st June; aircraft from Hobsonville Seaplane Base co-operated in some of the practices, and towed a sleeve target for the high-angle firings. This was the first occasion on which a sleeve target had been used on the New Zealand Station.

5. On 26th June, H.M.S. "Dunedin" left Auckland for a short cruise in the Pacific Islands, the places visited being Nukualofa (Tonga) where the ship was dressed overall on the occasion of the Prince's birthday (4th July), Suva (Fiji), Vila (New Hebrides, English and French Condominium), Noumea (New Caledonia, French), and Norfolk Island (Dependency of New South Wales).

At Noumea considerable hospitality was extended to Officers and men both by the Government and civilians, and very friendly feeling was created. The ship left with very definite assurances that another visit would be very welcome and much looked forward to.

6. On the night of leaving Auckland, 26th-27th June, a New Zealand rating, Able Seaman C. H. Hewson was lost overboard. This tragic occurrence was fully investigated by a Court of Inquiry, the minutes of which were forwarded to the Naval Board. The finding of the Court was that deceased was drowned at sea, the manner in which he fell overboard being impossible to determine.

7. Opportunity was taken on passage to Nukualofa to fix the correct position of certain of the Kermadec Islands which had been reported to the Marine Department, Wellington, as being incorrectly charted. H.M.S. "Dunedin" returned to Auckland on 1st August.

8. H.M.S. "Veronica" sailed for western group of Pacific Islands on 4th June, calling at Suva, Ratumah (Fiji), Funafuti, Vaitupu, Nui (Ellice Group), Beru, Tabiteuea, Tarawa, Maraki, Ocean Island (Gilbert Group), Tulagi, Gizo, Faisi, Royalist Harbour (Solomon Islands Protectorate), Vila, Bushmans Bay, Rano Island (New Hebrides), Vavau (Tonga).

9. Arrangements had been made for the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific to embark in H.M.S. "Veronica" for this cruise in order to visit the outlying islands of his commission, but on medical advice he was obliged to cancel his tour.

10. At the request of the Fijian Government, conveyed through the Hydrographer of the Navy, "Veronica" carried out a survey of Nambouwalou anchorage, where dangerous shoals had been reported, before returning to Auckland, at which place she arrived on 27th August for the relief of her Commanding Officer,

11. The eastern group of islands was cruised in by H.M.S. "Laburnum" who visited Vavau Pago Pago (American Samoa), Danger Island, Rakahanga, Penrhyn, Hervey Island, Rarotonga, Niue (Cook Islands), Moorea, Papeete (Society Islands, French), Apia, Tokelau Islands (Western Samoa), Suva, Wakaya, Vanua Mbalavu, Lautoka (Fiji), Nivafou Island, Nukualofa (Tonga).

12. During passage from Vavau to Pago Pago, H.M.S. "Laburnum's" foretopmast carried away during heavy weather and, by permission of the Governor, effective repairs were carried out in the United States Naval Base.

While at Pago Pago the United States Expedition to observe the eclipse at Niuafou arrived in U.S.S. "Tanager" and tentative arrangements were made for their co-operation with the New Zealand Solar Eclipse Expedition.

13. H.M.S. "Laburnum" was able to render assistance to the American yacht "Zaca," (Mr. Templeton Crocker) at Rarotonga when, as the result of her capstan breaking down, she had to slip cable to avoid dragging on to the reef.

14. The Administrator of Western Samoa embarked in H.M.S. "Laburnum" on her arrival at Apia, and made a tour of the Tokelau Islands, visiting Atafu, Nuku Nono, and Fakaofu.

15. At the request of the Administration, also conveyed through the Hydrographer of the Navy, observations were made to determine the exact latitude and longitude of the Western end of Savai'i Island which appeared to be in some doubt.

16. On 27th September, H.M.S. "Laburnum" left Suva with Dr. Adams, Dominion Astronomer, and six other members of the New Zealand Solar Eclipse Expedition on board. She arrived at Niuafou Island on 29th September and landed the party safely, the weather condition for disembarking being, fortunately, ideal.

17. As the result of a merchant ship having struck an unknown obstruction in the Egeria Channel entrance to Nukualofa, H.M.S. "Laburnum" carried out a survey of the channel. The obstruction was located, the necessary warnings were issued, and the area recharted. H.M.S. "Laburnum" returned to Auckland on 9th October.

18. During August and the first half of September H.M.S. "Dunedin" cruised in New Zealand waters, visiting the following places : Lyttelton, Timaru, Dunedin, Bluff, Preservation Inlet, George Sound, Dusky Sound, Breaksea Sound, Doubtful Inlet, Acheron Passage, Nelson (via Milford Sound), and Wellington.

19. The officers and ship's company of H.M.S. "Dunedin" were inspected by His Excellency the Governor-General on the 19th September.

While at Wellington four officers and 320 men underwent their annual musketry course at Trentham.

20. From the 30th September to the 10th October H.M.S. "Veronica" carried out exercises in the Hauraki Gulf under the command of her new Commanding Officer (Commander Horace L. Morgan, D.S.O., Royal Navy). She returned to Auckland to undergo refit with H.M.S. "Laburnum," which was completed on 24th November.

21. Their Excellencies the Governor-General and the Lady Bledisloe embarked in H.M.S. "Dunedin" for passage from Wellington to Picton on 31st October, and returned in her to Wellington on 4th November. H.M.S. "Dunedin" then proceeded to visit New Plymouth and Napier, returning to Auckland on 21st November.

While at Napier H.M.S. "Dunedin" proceeded alongside the breakwater, and fourteen thousand people visited the ship.

22. Further gunnery and torpedo exercises were carried out in the Hauraki Gulf by H.M.S. "Dunedin" with the assistance of H.M.S. "Veronica" and H.M. Trawler "Wakakura" from 1st to 3rd December. Information was received on 3rd December that a man had been seriously injured on board a scow at Catherine Bay, Great Barrier. H.M.S. "Dunedin" proceeded there, and, taking the man to Auckland for hospital treatment, returned next day to the Gulf to complete her exercises. Independent exercises were carried out by H.M. Ships "Veronica" and "Laburnum" during the ensuing week.

23. On 15th December, H.M.S. "Diomedé" (Captain Martin J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy) arrived at Auckland on completion of repairs in England, and in company with H.M.S. "Dunedin" remained there until 3rd February, 1931, to give Christmas leave, &c.

24. As a new departure, H.M. Ships "Veronica" and "Laburnum" did not spend Christmas at Auckland, but proceeded to Wellington and Napier respectively for this season. They returned to Auckland, H.M.S. "Veronica" on 26th January, having also visited Tauranga and Kawau, and "Laburnum" on 23rd January, having visited Tokomaru Bay and Port Fitzroy.

25. All ships were present for the Auckland Anniversary Regatta, the occasion being celebrated by ships being dressed overall, H.M.S. "Diomedé" proceeding into the stream, where she was open to visitors.

26. On 2nd February 250 seamen and marines from H.M. Ships "Dunedin" and "Diomedé" including two field guns' crews and the Flagship's band landed for a ceremonial march through the streets of Auckland.

27. H.M.S. "Veronica" sailed on 1st February to carry out an independent cruise in New Zealand waters, and arrived at Napier at 7.0 a.m. on 3rd February. H.M.S. "Laburnum" sailed on 2nd February for a similar purpose, arriving at Whangarei on the following day.

News of the disastrous earthquake in Hawke's Bay was received from H.M.S. "Veronica" by me at Auckland, where, with H.M. Ships "Dunedin" and "Diomedé," I was on the point of sailing for Russell.

I therefore proceeded with all speed with the two ships to Napier, having taken on board doctors, nurses, and special medical stores, &c.

The three ships remained at Napier for a week rendering all possible aid, and only returned to Auckland when no longer required at the scene of the disaster, H.M.S. "Veronica" proceeding into dock to survey the damage received during the earthquake.

A full report of the work carried out during this period has already been submitted to you.

28. H.M.S. "Laburnum," which had been recalled to Auckland in case she would be required to render further assistance, continued on her cruise and visited Whangarei, Whangaroa, New Plymouth, Nelson, Lyttelton, Dunedin, Timaru, and Wellington, at which port she was present on the concluding day of this report.

The assistance of divers and shipwrights was lent by H.M.S. "Laburnum" to M.V. "Hauraki" which ran aground whilst being berthed at New Plymouth. Considerable damage was done to the ship's bottom, but temporary repairs were effected which enabled the ship to proceed to Auckland to dock.

29. While H.M. Ships "Dunedin" and "Diomedé" were at Auckland two serious fires, one of considerable magnitude, broke out simultaneously in the city on the night of 16th February. As it appeared that the resources of the fire brigades and police would be fully taxed in coping with both the fires and regulating the traffic, parties of seamen and marines were landed to render assistance.

30. In view of the Hawke's Bay disaster, I cancelled the arrangements that had been made for H.M. Ships. "Dunedin" and "Diomedé" to proceed to Australia to carry out exercises with the Australian Squadron, and the two ships proceeded to Russell.

31. On 26th February I relinquished command of H.M.S. "Dunedin" to Captain Martin J. C. d\* Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy, and my broad pendant was transferred to H.M.S. "Diomedé."

H.M.S. "Dunedin" sailed for England on 28th February via Sydney, Surabaya, Singapore, Colombo, Aden, Port Said, Malta, and Gibraltar to undergo a large refit at Chatham.

From information I have received the impression created at all those ports by a cruiser of the New Zealand Division was most favourable. At Surabaya the Dutch authorities gave a very warm welcome to H.M.S. "Dunedin" as an appreciation of the hospitality received by the Netherlands Squadron in New Zealand.

32. H.M.S. "Diomedé" then visited Whangaroa, Port Fitzroy (where gunnery exercises were carried out with H.M.S. "Veronica"), Picton, and Nelson, at which latter port the ship was on 31st March. H.M.S. "Veronica" visited Akaroa and Lyttelton.

33. During the year under review the warm welcome and hospitality received by H.M. ships at the various ports visited made it evident that the people of the Dominion appreciate the presence and work of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy.

The customary return entertaining, both official and semi-official, carried out by all H.M. ships as is incumbent upon them, has augmented the mutual good feeling which exists and is a valuable channel through which the reason for the existence of the New Zealand Division and the importance of its duties can be made known without involving any charge upon public funds.

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

H.M.S. "Philomel" (Commander Nelson Clover, Royal Navy, relieved in February, 1931 by Commander Edward L. Berthon, M.V.O., Royal Navy) continues to act as training-ship for the New Zealand Division and Naval Depot Ship at Auckland.

2. As stated in my last report, owing to the postponement of the building of the barracks on account of financial stringency, arrangements were made for the ship to be surveyed to ascertain how long she could continue to act in her present capacity. The ship was accordingly docked and a survey carried out in June, 1930, which showed that, with certain repairs, she would last for at least another four years. The sum of £2,000 has been spent on her during the year to effect these necessary repairs.

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

H.M. Trawler "Wakakura" (Lieutenant Henry F. Edwards, Royal Navy, relieved in July, 1930, by Mr. Thomas E. Brooker, Commissioned Gunner, Royal Navy) has carried out a very considerable amount of Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve training work during the year.

2. During April and May, 1930, five sections of the Wellington Division were embarked, each for a week's training, after which the ship returned to Auckland, where nine sections of the Auckland Division carried out training between July and December.

3. The ship again proceeded south on 29th December, and five sections of the Otago Division and three of the Canterbury Division were embarked before the end of the year under report.

4. While in northern waters from June to December, H.M. Trawler "Wakakura" assisted all ships of the Squadron in carrying out gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Hauraki Gulf by towing targets, &c.

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

R.F.A. "Nucula" (Lieutenant Arthur W. Beardsall, Royal Naval Reserve) left Auckland in November, 1930, to oil H.M.S. "Diomedes" at Nukuhiva on passage from England, and to proceed to California to load a cargo of oil for the naval tanks at Auckland. Negotiations, however, which had been proceeding for some months with the Australian Government for R.F.A. "Nucula" to carry oil for their naval tanks at Sydney, were completed, and she was diverted to that port instead of Auckland. A considerable economy was effected by this means. The heavy cost of maintenance while paid off has been obviated, and the ship has been performing useful service by carrying oil fuel for the Royal Australian Navy. It is hoped, if possible, to continue this arrangement during the forthcoming and following years whereby, while not actively engaged in carrying oil for the New Zealand Division, the "Nucula" can help to pay for her cost of upkeep.

2. Considerable trouble was caused by the union crew "walking off" before the ship left Auckland, and it was necessary to man "Nucula" with a naval crew from H.M.S. "Philomel" in order that "Diomedes" passage to New Zealand might not be held up. The resulting drain on the personnel resources in "Philomel" necessitated practically all work in the latter ship coming to a standstill.

## VI. VISITS OF FOREIGN WARSHIPS TO THE DOMINION.

A Netherlands Naval Squadron, consisting of the Cruiser "Java" (Captain J. de Graaf), flying the flag of Rear Admiral C. C. Kayser, Commanding Her Netherlands Majesty's Squadron in the Dutch Indies, and the destroyers "De Ruyter" (Lieutenant-Commander J. van Leeuwen) and "Evertsen" (Lieutenant-Commander van der Sande Lacoste) visited Wellington from the 17th to the 21st October, 1930. H.M.S. "Dunedin" was present, and the usual courtesies were exchanged.

2. The Dutch Squadron proceeded to Auckland and remained there from the 24th to the 29th October. The Destroyer "De Ruyter" docked on arrival at Auckland to repair underwater plating which had been damaged by heavy weather on passage from Sydney, and to make good a small engine defect.

Engine defects also developed in the Cruiser "Java," which delayed the sailing of the squadron.

All defects were made good under the supervision of the Engineer Officer of the Base (Engineer Commander Charles Marchant, Royal Naval Reserve (N.Z.D.)) to the entire satisfaction of the ships' officers.

## VII. GENERAL.

Drills and exercises have been carried out on all possible occasions, and the efficiency of the personnel has been well maintained. The absence of one cruiser in England has again been very much felt, and little in the way of competitive training and practices has been practicable.

2. As mentioned elsewhere, the combined exercises which had been arranged to take place with the Australian Squadron had unfortunately to be cancelled, owing to existing circumstances. This cancellation is much to be regretted. Seagoing exercises of the nature contemplated are essential for the fighting efficiency of warships and the proper training of officers and men for war.

3. Due to the suspension of military training, no combined operations with the Defence Forces were possible.

4. Apart from the specific instances of hydrographical work referred to in Section V, the normal correction and augmentation of hydrographical charts and publications have been carried out wherever the necessity was apparent. This work is necessarily restricted by the limited time in the various ports and anchorages, but it ensures that changes in the more remote localities of interest to mariners in general are noted and remarked on.

I have, &c.,

GEOFFREY BLAKE, Rear-Admiral,

Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station.