

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION, FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 1933 TO 31st MARCH 1934

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

REPORT

The Honourable the Minister of Defence.

H.M.S. "Dunedin", at Auckland, 9th June, 1934.

SIR, –

I have the honour to address to you the following report on the Naval Forces of the Dominion and the proceedings of the New Zealand Station during the year 1st April, 1933, to 31st March, 1934.

I. STATE.

The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy on the 31st March, 1934, consisted of-

H.M.S. "Dunedin" (wearing the broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station), H.M.S. "Diomedé," H.M.S. "Philomel," non-seagoing training and depot ship at Devonport, Auckland, H.M.S. "Wakakura" (trawler), and R.F.A. "Nucula," the squadron oiler.

2. H.M.S. "Laburnum," maintained at the expense of the Imperial Government, is also employed on the New Zealand Station, under the orders of the Commodore Commanding.

H.M.S. "Veronica," similarly maintained and employed, sailed from Auckland for the United Kingdom on the 24th February, 1934, and will shortly be relieved by H.M.S. "Leith."

II. PERSONNEL (ACTIVE SERVICE).

3. H.M.S. "Diomedé" was reduced to special complement on the 11th May, 1933, for refit preparatory to recommissioning.

I transferred my broad pendant to H.M.S. "Dunedin," Captain Martin J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy, returning to the United Kingdom, and Captain Victor A. C. Crutchley, V.C., D.S.C., Royal Navy, assuming command of H.M.S. "Diomedé."

H.M.S. "Diomedé" was recommissioned at Auckland on the 3rd August, 1933, Captain Cosmo M. Graham, Royal Navy, relieving Captain Crutchley, who returned to the United Kingdom.

Commander Basil C. B. Brooke, Royal Navy, relieved Commander Edward L. Berthon, D.S.C., Royal Navy, in command of H.M.S. "Philomel," and as Naval Officer-in-Charge, Auckland, on the 10th November, 1933.

Captain (Retired) Edwin G. Morris, Royal Navy, succeeded Captain (Retired) John R. Middleton, D.S.O., Royal Navy, as Director of Naval Reserves on the 25th November, 1933.

4. On the concluding date of this report there were 459 ratings on the active list who had been recruited in New Zealand, and 18 Imperial ratings who had been accepted for permanent service in the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. The ships' companies were completed by 451 ratings loaned from the Imperial Service.

5. The ratings entered during the year included 12 boys for the Seaman and Communications Branches, 10 Stokers, and 4 ratings for miscellaneous branches, making a total of 26.

Recruiting was satisfactory, except that some difficulty was experienced in obtaining a sufficient number of boys of the required standard for the Seaman and Communications Branches.

Twenty-seven New Zealand ratings were discharged during the year.

6. The advancement of ratings in the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy continues to compare favourably with that in the Imperial Service.

A number of ratings were sent during the year to establishments overseas for special courses of instruction.

Non-substantive ratings have been introduced for Signal and Telegraphist Branches to accord with Imperial practice.

7. The health and discipline of the ships' companies have been satisfactory.

III. PERSONNEL, ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (N.Z.D.).

8. The strength of the Royal Naval Reserve on the 31st March, 1934, was as follows : Officers, 7; ratings, 150.

9. Officers have been entered in accordance with the revised conditions and programme referred to in my last report, but the number of candidates has been extremely small.

The position is receiving consideration.

10. The men are mainly ex-Naval ratings who are required to serve in the Reserve for a term of years after completion of their Active Service engagements.

IV. PERSONNEL, ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE (N.Z.D.).

11. The numbers borne on the 31st March, 1934, were as follows : Officers—List I, 57; List II, 27. Men—List I, 593; List II, 550.

12. Approximately 80 per cent. of the Executive Officers and 77 per cent. of the men on List I performed the required period of obligatory training in H.M.S. "Wakakura" or on board the cruisers.

Officers and men have displayed great keenness in embarking for training beyond the minimum period.

The appearance and bearing of all Divisions on parade is most satisfactory, and the good morale is exemplified by the results obtained in boat-pulling and sailing races, and at rifle meetings in competition with officers and men of H.M. Ships.

13. The provision of W/T installations at the four Divisional Headquarters is nearing completion, and considerable progress has been made in the training of ratings of the Signal and Telegraphist Branches.

14. The training of reservists of all branches continues to be seriously impaired by the lack of a second trawler, and this vessel is urgently required for purposes of training and also as a contribution towards local defence.

15. As regards the rehousing of the headquarters of the Otago Division, *vide* my previous report, it is hoped that a suitable building, at present occupied by another Department, will be made available.

V. PROCEEDINGS (CRUISERS OF N.Z. DIVISION).

"Diomedé."

16. H.M.S. "Diomedé" (Broad Pendant of the Commodore Commanding) sailed from Wellington for Auckland on the 3rd April, 1933, for storing, &c., preparatory to the annual cruise to the Pacific Islands.

His Excellency the Governor-General decided to take the opportunity of this cruise to pay official visits to Western Samoa and certain other islands.

Their Excellencies embarked on the 11th April, and "Diomedé" sailed the same day for Nukualofa, where the ship remained from the 15th to the 17th April, proceeding thence to Apia via Vavau.

Their Excellencies were the guests of the Administrator during the period of the visit to Western Samoa.

"Diomedé" sailed for Rarotonga on the 24th April, calling at Pago Pago for a few hours to enable visits to be exchanged between Their Excellencies and the Governor of American Samoa.

Their Excellencies proceeded to the Residency on arrival at Rarotonga, and remained on shore during the period of the visit.

"Diomedé" sailed for Auckland on the 29th April, Their Excellencies disembarking on arrival on the 5th May.

As previously stated, "Diomedé" was then reduced to special complement, refitted at the Naval Base, Devonport, and recommissioned on the 3rd August.

I then transferred my broad pendant to H.M.S. "Dunedin," Captain Cosmo M. Graham, Royal Navy, taking over the command of "Diomedé."

August and the early part of September were devoted to gunnery and torpedo practices in the Hauraki Gulf, and exercises with ships of H.M. Australian Squadron.

"Diomedé" sailed for Wellington on the 18th September, and proceeded, after further exercises with the Australian Squadron, to New Plymouth, Nelson, Marlborough Sounds, Lyttelton, Akaroa, and Dunedin, returning to Auckland on the 7th November.

The ship sailed for Wellington on the 13th November, exercises being carried out with aircraft from Hobsonville whilst in the Hauraki Gulf.

Gisborne was visited from the 28th November to the 5th December.

Practices were carried out in the Hauraki Gulf on the 6th and 7th December, and the ship then returned to Auckland to give the usual Christmas leave.

"Diomedé" was in company with "Dunedin" during the period of gunnery and torpedo practices from the 22nd January to the 22nd February.

The annual pulling and sailing regattas were held at Russell.

"Diomedé" left Russell for Napier on the 22nd February, calling at Waikokopu, Hawke's Bay, en route.

The ship then proceeded to Wellington, arriving there on the 2nd March, and the ship's company commenced their annual musketry training at Trentham Camp.

"Dunedin."

17. H.M.S. "Dunedin" (Captain M. J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy) arrived at Wellington from Akaroa on the 1st April, 1933.

Musketry courses were carried out at Trentham.

The first annual Squadron Rifle Meeting was held during the period 18th-20th April.

"Dunedin" sailed on the 26th April for Queen Charlotte Sound, where landing parties were exercised, and proceeded thence to Auckland via Picton.

The broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding was then transferred from "Diomedea" to "Dunedin," Captain de Meric returning to England.

"Dunedin" sailed on the 15th June for a cruise in the Pacific Islands, and visited Norfolk Island, Noumea, Vila, Hog Harbour in the New Hebrides, Ocean Island, Tarawa and Funafuti in the Ellice Islands, Suva and Wakaya in the Fiji Islands, Apia, Pago Pago, and Nukualofa.

The ship returned to Auckland on the 14th August, and sailed for Russell on the 22nd. Exercises and practices were carried out with the Australian Squadron during the period 23rd August -- 8th September, after which the "Dunedin" visited Napier, Wellington, and Picton. Further exercises were carried out with the Australian Squadron to the westward of Cook Strait on the 27th September.

"Dunedin" then visited Milford Sounds, Stewart Island, Bluff, Dunedin, Timaru, Akaroa, Lyttelton, and Wellington, and returned to Auckland on the 18th November.

On the 15th December I sailed from Wellington by mail steamer to attend the Naval Conference at Singapore, and Commander P. B. R. W. William-Powlett, Royal Navy, assumed command of the "Dunedin" until I rejoined the ship on the 2nd March.

Gunnery, torpedo, and general exercises were carried out, and the annual pulling and sailing regattas held, during January and February.

The ships of the New Zealand Division were at Russell from the 5th to the 7th February in connection with the Waitangi celebrations.

"Dunedin" paid a short visit to Gisborne towards the end of February, and then proceeded to Wellington to enable the ship's company to carry out musketry training.

VI. PROCEEDINGS (H.M. SLOOPS).

18. H.M. Ships "Veronica" (Captain W. L. Jackson, D.S.O., Royal Navy) and "Laburnum" (Commander R. Ramsbotham, Royal Navy) were at Wellington on the 18th April, 1933, and sailed for Auckland on the 24th April and 21st April respectively, the former visiting Wanganui and Whangaroa, and the latter Picton, en route.

19. "Veronica" sailed on the 16th June for a cruise in the Pacific Islands, visiting Vavau, Samoa, and various ports and anchorages in the Cook Islands, Society Islands, and Fiji Islands.

The ship returned to Auckland on the 13th October, cruised in New Zealand waters from November to January, and sailed for England on the 24th February to be paid off, and eventually broken up, after nearly fourteen years' service on the New Zealand Station.

20. H.M.S. "Laburnum" cruised in the Pacific Islands from June to September, visiting Noumea and various ports in the New Hebrides, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and the Fiji Islands.

Commander A. H. Maxwell-Hyslop, A.M., Royal Navy, relieved Commander R. Ramsbotham, Royal Navy, on the 13th October.

"Laburnum" visited a number of New Zealand ports from November to January, and was employed during February in the Hauraki Gulf in connection with gunnery practices.

VII. H.M.S. "PHILOMEL."

21. H.M.S. "Philomel" (Commander Basil C. B. Brooke, Royal Navy) continues to act as training and depot ship at Devonport, Auckland.

The ship was docked in December, 1933, when her hull was found to be in sound condition.

VIII. H.M.S. "WAKAKURA."

22. H.M.S. "Wakakura" (Commissioned Gunner Archibald Garden, Royal Navy) has been employed almost continuously in training officers and men of the Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago Divisions of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

IX. R.F.A. "NUCULA."

23. R.F.A. "Nucula" (Mr. George A. Atwood, Master) was in commission from the 3rd July to the 28th August, 1933, and made one voyage to San Francisco, California, for the purpose of replenishing stocks of oil fuel.

The vessel also refuelled H.M.S. "Dunedin" at Suva.

X. NAVAL BASE.

24. The experience gained in refitting H.M.S. "Diomedé" in 1933 has shown that a D Class cruiser can be refitted efficiently at Devonport, Auckland, but the time required is unduly long.

Facilities for certain classes of work are not available, and such items have necessarily to be sent overseas.

Additional plant and more modern machines will need to be provided in connection with the refitting of later classes of cruisers.

XI. NAVAL ARMAMENT DEPOT.

25. The defective shell store referred to in my last report has been replaced, and it is proposed to erect the additional magazine during 1934-35.

XII. VISITS OF FOREIGN WARSHIPS.

26. The French Sloop "Savorgnan de Brazza" visited Auckland from the 30th May to the 13th June.

XIII. DRILLS, EXERCISES, AND TRAINING AFLOAT, AND GENERAL REMARKS.

27. The visit of the Australian Squadron to New Zealand waters afforded many opportunities for combined exercises, &c., and proved of the greatest possible value.

It is most desirable that the policy of these visits be continued.

XIV. POLICY.

28. The majority of the requirements in connection with Naval defence were deferred on financial grounds, and the position as regards reserves of materiel, &c., is not satisfactory.

Provision for certain of the more urgent services is being included in the estimates for 1934-35.

I have, &c.,

F. BURGESS WATSON,

Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station.