

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION, FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 1934 TO 31st MARCH 1935

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, 20th April, 1935.

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, 1934, to 31st March, 1935.

I. STATE.

The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy on the 31st March, 1935, consisted of-

H.M.S. "Dunedin" (wearing the broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station), H.M.S. "Diomedes," 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. "Leith," maintained at the expense of the Imperial Government, is also employed on the New Zealand Station under the orders of the Commodore Commanding.

3. H.M.S. "Laburnum," similarly maintained and employed, sailed from Auckland for Singapore on the 11th February, 1935, and will shortly be relieved by H.M.S. "Wellington."

II. PERSONNEL (ACTIVE SERVICE).

4. On the concluding date of this report there were 477 ratings on the active list who had been recruited in New Zealand, and 19 Imperial ratings who had been accepted for permanent service in the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. The ships' Companies will be completed by 437 ratings loaned and 30 ratings on interchange from the Imperial Service.

5. The ratings entered during the year included 30 boys of the Seaman and Communications Branches, 8 Stokers, and 9 ratings for miscellaneous branches, making a total of 47. Recruiting has improved, an officer from H.M.S. "Philomel" having visited the Military Staff Officers of all districts.

6. Twenty-nine New Zealand ratings were discharged during the year.

7. Advancements of New Zealand ratings continue to compare favourably with those in the Imperial Service. A large number of New Zealand ratings were sent during the year to establishments in Australia and the United Kingdom for special courses of instruction, and one more New Zealand rating was promoted to warrant rank. Consideration has also been given to a scheme for promotion of exceptional young New Zealand ratings to commissioned rank.

8. In accordance with an agreement with the Admiralty, 30 New Zealand ratings have recently proceeded to England to serve in the Royal Navy on an interchange basis for approximately three years.

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

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

10. The strength of the Royal Naval Reserve on the 31st March, 1935; was as follows: Officers, 8; ratings, 100.

11. The programme for the entry of officers has been maintained, but up to recently no young officers have been available. The situation is now greatly improved, due to the Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand having entered a number of young officers.

12. The reduction in the number of men is due to the removal from the list of men discharged from the Naval Service "medically unfit" who were formerly included in the Reserve.

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

13. The numbers borne on the 31st March, 1935, were as follows: Officers—List I, 66; List II, 22. Men—List I, 567; List II, 683.

14. Approximately 53 per cent. of the Executive Officers and 73 per cent. of the men on List I have undergone obligatory training in H.M.S. "Wakakura" or the cruisers. Officers have experienced increased difficulty in obtaining leave of absence, and training has been restricted accordingly.

15. Progress has been made in providing adequate facilities for instruction in all subjects at the four Divisional Headquarters. The keenness displayed by all ranks and ratings is most gratifying.

16. No provision has yet been made for the second mine-sweeping vessel referred to in former reports. This continues to be an urgent requirement. The question of obtaining a vessel locally has been fully investigated; and no suitable vessel is available. Plans of a modern Admiralty trawler, modified to embody the requirements of a seagoing training-vessel, have been prepared and despatched by the Admiralty.

17. In July, 1934, the s.s. "Duchess," of Auckland, was chartered by the Naval Board for a period of twelve weeks and fitted out and commissioned as a minesweeper. Extensive trials were carried out in conjunction with H.M.S. "Wakakura." Although the "Duchess" is not a typical coastal vessel, much valuable information was obtained in connection with the requirements which go to make a vessel suitable as a mine-sweeper and the work required to be carried out at the Base. Financial considerations restricted training, but officers and ratings especially selected for instructional duties at Headquarters were embarked from each Division.

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

H.M.S. "Dunedin."

18. On 1st April, 1934, H.M.S. "Dunedin" (broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding) was at Wellington, where the ship's company was carrying out the annual musketry course at Trentham Camp.

19. The annual Royal Naval Rifle Meeting, at which teams from H.M. Ships "Dunedin," "Diomedes," and "Philomel," and the R.N.V.R. competed, concluded on the 3rd April. "Dunedin" sailed from Wellington on the 4th April, and visited New Plymouth, Nelson, and Queen Charlotte Sound before returning to Wellington on the 23rd April.

20. On the 26th April "Dunedin" sailed for Auckland for docking, storing, &c., preparatory to the annual cruise to the Pacific Islands.

21. On the 15th June "Dunedin" sailed for the Pacific Islands, and visited Nukualofa, Suva, Apia, Pago Pago, Bora Bora, Tahiti, Moorea, Raiatea, and Rarotonga. His Excellency the Administrator of Western Samoa and his staff were embarked at Apia for passage to Pago Pago. The ship returned to Auckland on the 7th August.

22. During the period 3rd to 14th September "Dunedin," in company with "Diomede," carried out gunnery and torpedo practices in the Hauraki Gulf.

23. On the 17th September "Dunedin" and "Diomede" sailed for Australia, and, after visiting Sydney and Hobart, arrived at Melbourne for the centenary celebrations on the 18th October. When approaching Port Melbourne they met H.M.A.S. "Canberra" and "Australia" and H.M.I.S. "Hindustan," and formed an escort for H.M.S. "Sussex," flying the Standard of H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester.

24. "Dunedin" and "Diomede" sailed from Melbourne on the 7th November, and, after visiting Dunedin and Lyttelton respectively, arrived at Wellington on the 18th November in order to be present during the visit of the Italian Cruiser "Armando Diaz."

25. The ships sailed from Wellington for Auckland on the 20th November. While at Auckland, Christmas leave was given to half the ship's companies, and on the 12th December the ships sailed for Wellington via North Cape.

26. The cruisers met H.M.A.S. "Australia," flying the Standard of the Duke of Gloucester, at sea, and on the 15th December, in company with H.M. Ships "Laburnum" and "Leith" escorted her into Wellington Harbour. "Dunedin" and "Diomede" sailed for Auckland on the 20th December. Christmas leave was given to the other half of the ships' companies.

27. On the 18th January, 1935, the main draft of Imperial ratings serving in "Dunedin" sailed for England, having completed their service on the New Zealand Station: The refit of the ship commenced the next day.

28. "Dunedin" paid off on the 14th March and recommissioned on the 15th March, and will shortly be completed to full complement.

"Diomede."

29. On 1st April, 1934, H.M.S. "Diomede" (Captain C. M. Graham, A.D.C., Royal Navy) was at Wellington, where the ship's company was carrying out the annual musketry course at Trentham Camp.

30. "Diomede" sailed from Wellington on the 4th April, and visited Akaroa, Timaru, and Queen Charlotte Sound before returning to Wellington on the 23rd April. The following day the ship sailed for Auckland and arrived there on the 28th April, having spent two days in the Hauraki Gulf en route in order to carry out gunnery and torpedo exercises.

31. At Auckland "Diomede" was docked, stored, &c., preparatory to the annual cruise to the Pacific Islands.

32. On the 30th June "Diomede" sailed for the Pacific Islands, and visited Norfolk Island, Vila, Espiritu Santo Islands, Hog Harbour, Funafuti, Rotumah, Suva, and Nukualofa before returning to Auckland on the 10th August.

33. From the 10th August until the 5th February, 1935, "Diomede" was in company with "Dunedin," except for a visit to Lyttelton from the 12th to 17th November while "Dunedin" was visiting Dunedin.

34. "Diomede" was docked at Auckland in January, 1935, and, having carried out gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Hauraki Gulf from the 5th to 7th February, sailed on the latter date for the autumn cruise to New Zealand ports. The ship visited Gisborne, Wellington, Queen Charlotte Sound, Lyttelton, Akaroa, Dunedin, and the West Coast Sounds before returning to Wellington on the 8th March to enable the ship's company to carry out the annual musketry training at Trentham.

35. A guard of honour, provided by H.M. Ships "Diomede" and "Leith," was mounted on Glasgow Wharf for His Excellency the Governor-General, Lord Bledisloe, on his departure from New Zealand on the 15th March.

VI. PROCEEDINGS (H.M. SLOOPS).

36. H.M.S. "Laburnum" (Commander A. H. Maxwell-Hyslop, A..M., Royal Navy) was at Auckland on the 1st April, 1934. The ship paid off and recommissioned on the 11th April.

37. "Laburnum" sailed on the 13th. June for a cruise in the Pacific Islands, visiting Pago Pago, Apia, the Tokelau Islands, Vavau, Nukualofa, Suva, and various ports and anchorages in the Fiji group before returning to Auckland on the 4th September. She cruised in New Zealand waters from November to January. "Laburnum" sailed for Singapore on the 11th February, 1935, to pay off and become the Straits Settlements Naval Volunteer Reserve drill-ship, after thirteen years continuous service on the New Zealand Station.

38. H.M.S. "Leith" (Captain O. Bevir, Royal Navy) arrived at Auckland from England on the 14th November, 1934, as relief for H.M.S. "Veronica." The ship visited New Zealand ports from December to March, 1935.

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

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

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

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

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

41. R.F.A. "Nucula" (Mr. G. A. Atwood, Master). was in commission from 3rd April, 1934, to 9th January, 1935, and made three voyages to Abadan, Persian Gulf, for the purpose of replenishing stocks of oil fuel. The vessel also fuelled H.M.S. "Dunedin" at Bora Bora and H.M.S. "Diomedea" at Suva and supplied 1,200 tons of fuel to the Royal Australian Navy at Sydney.

X. NAVAL BASE.

42. Large repairs to H.M.S. "Dunedin" were carried out, and the other ships of the Squadron underwent periodical dockings and minor repairs. Plans are being prepared to modernize the Naval Base and to provide the necessary plant and equipment to undertake the periodical refits of the larger ships which are expected to arrive on the station in the course of the next two years. By arrangement with the Admiralty, two Imperial dockyard officers—viz., a Constructor and a Deputy Naval Store Officer—have been appointed for duty at the Naval Base.

Xi. NAVAL ARMAMENT DEPOT.

43. It was not practicable to proceed with the construction of the additional magazine accommodation at Fort Takapuna referred to in my last report, owing to the requirements of the Defence Department, and plans are accordingly being prepared for the transfer of the Naval Armament Depot to a new site which will permit the necessary expansion, required for the increased quantities of ammunition, to be effected in due course.

XII. VISITS OF H.M. AUSTRALIAN SHIPS.

44. H.M.A.S. "Australia" flying the Standard of H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, visited New Zealand in December, 1934, and January, 1935, en route from Australia to the United Kingdom.

45. H.M. Australian Squadron, consisting of "Canberra," (flagship of Rear Admiral W. T. R. Ford, C.B.), H.M.S. "Sussex," and H.M.A. Ships "Stuart," "Voyager," and "Vendetta" commenced a cruise to New Zealand waters on 4th March, 1935, visits being paid to Russell, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and New Plymouth.

XIII. VISITS OF FOREIGN WARSHIPS.

46. The Italian Cruiser "Armando Diaz" visited Wellington from the 17th to the 23rd. November, 1934.

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

47. In addition to the normal programme of exercises and drills, the opportunity was taken of carrying out combined operations with ships of H.M. Australian Squadron, both during the visit to Australia and the visits to New Zealand of H.M.A. Ships.

XV. POLICY.

48. Steady progress has been made in the provision of reserves of stores, &c., but there still remains much to be done. The main policy has been directed towards the provision of the increased repair and other facilities required by the larger and more modern ships which are due to arrive during the next two years.

I have, &c.,

F. BURGESS WATSON,

Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station.