

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES
REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF
FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 1939 TO 31st MARCH 1940

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

REPORT

Navy Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1940

The Honourable the Minister of Defence.

SIR, –

I have the honour to address to you the following report on the New Zealand Naval Forces and proceedings on the New Zealand Naval Station during the year 1st April, 1939, to 31st March, 1940.

SECTION 1.-STATE AND ADMINISTRATION.

2. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the New Zealand Naval Forces consisted of H.M.S. "Leander" (broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron), H.M.S. "Achilles," H.M.S. "Philomel" (non sea-going training and depot ship at Devonport, Auckland), H.M.S. "Wakakura" (trawler), and R.F.A. "Nucula" (hulk for storage of oil at Auckland; no longer sea-going).

3. Two escort vessels, H.M. Ships "Wellington" and "Leith" were maintained on the station by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. They formed part of the New Zealand Squadron and were administered by the Commodore Commanding, under the general control of the Chief of the Naval Staff.

4. H.M.S. "Endeavour" was employed on surveying duties in New Zealand waters. The cost of fuel and refit was borne by the New Zealand Government and other charges by His Majesty's Government, in the United Kingdom.

5. H.M. Ships "Wellington," "Leith," and "Endeavour" have been withdrawn by the Admiralty from the New Zealand Station, but H.M.S. "Hector" (armed merchant cruiser) has been allocated to the station, and arrived at Auckland on 10th February, 1940.

6. On the outbreak of hostilities the New Zealand Naval Forces were placed on a war footing and the operational control of H.M. Ships "Leander" and "Achilles" vested in the Admiralty.

7. As a temporary war measure the offices of Chief of the Naval Staff and First Naval Member of the New Zealand Naval Board, and Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron, have been combined, as from 1st January, 1940, Commodore H. E. Horan, D.S.C., succeeding Commodore J. W. Rivett-Carnac, D.S.C., as Commodore Commanding the Squadron and in command of H.M.S. "Leander," while retaining the office of Chief of the Naval Staff and First Naval Member.

SECTION II—PERSONNEL (ACTIVE SERVICE).

8. The scheme for the direct entry of New Zealand candidates for service as commissioned officers has now been approved and will shortly be announced. The cadets will receive training in England on identical lines to, and with, R.N. entries.

9. The scheme adopted in the Royal Navy whereby outstanding ratings from the lower deck may be recommended to undergo special courses for promotion to commissioned rank has been accepted as a very desirable means of promotion for suitable New Zealand ratings. Early in 1939 three New Zealand ratings were appropriated for service in the Royal Navy as prospective candidates for promotion to commissioned rank, and there are very good prospects of one of the candidates being promoted to Sub-Lieutenant about September, 1940. Of the two remaining candidates one did not attain, at a preliminary examination, the standard required to continue the course, but was selected to undergo a course for warrant rank; the remaining candidate withdrew from the course.

10. Every endeavour is being made to obtain New Zealand officers, and in this connection, apart from those mentioned in paragraph 7 above, the following have either qualified or been entered as officers :—

- 1 Chaplain.
- 1 Schoolmaster.
- 1 Gunner (T).
- 2 Acting Warrant Writers (plus one expected to qualify in May, 1940).

11. On 31st March, 1910, there were 12 officers and 801 ratings borne on the active list, all of whom (except 16) had been entered or recruited in New Zealand. The overall increase of New Zealand ratings borne during the year is 118. The ships' companies were completed by 70 officers and 531 ratings lent from the Royal Navy.

12. The ratings entered during the year included 39 boys and 34 short-service ordinary seamen for the seamen and communication branches, making a total of 137. Recruiting has continued to be very satisfactory in the seamen and stoker branches, though the numbers for the May, 1939, entry were somewhat low. The shortage in this entry was partly made up in the October entry, the larger number applying no doubt being due to the outbreak of hostilities. The position in regard to the miscellaneous ratings has never been very satisfactory, but from the number shown—viz., 38 entries against 16 for the preceding year—a substantial improvement has been attained, especially in the artisan branches.

13. Thirty New Zealand ratings took their discharge during the year. The policy of sending New Zealand ratings to the United Kingdom and Australia to qualify for higher substantive and non-substantive rating at the gunnery and torpedo schools has been continued, and in this direction good progress has been made, as a result of which Imperial ratings have been reverted to the Royal Navy. On completion of the shore accommodation and instructional buildings at the Naval Base, Devonport, the despatch of ratings to the United Kingdom and Australia to qualify for higher rating will, to a considerable extent, cease.

14. The following advancements of New Zealand ratings have been made during the period under review (number in previous year shown in brackets) :—

Able Seaman to Acting Leading Seaman	11	(15)
Leading Seaman to Acting Petty Officer	9	(5)
Petty Officer to Chief Petty Officer ..	5	(0)
Able Seaman to Sailmaker's Mate	1	(0)
Sailmaker's Mate to Acting Sailmaker	1	(0)
Sailmaker to Chief Sailmaker	1	(0)
Telegraphist to Acting Leading Telegraphist ..	2	(3)

Leading Telegraphist to Acting Petty Officer Telegraphist	5	(2)
Signalman to Acting Leading Signalman	1	(3)
Leading Signalman to Acting Yeoman of Signals	1	(1)
Stoker, 1st Class, to Acting Leading Stoker	15	(19)
Leading Stoker to Acting Stoker Petty Officer	5	(4)
Stoker Ratings to Acting Stoker Petty Officer (provisionally selected as mechanician candidates)	3	(5)
Supply Assistant to Leading Supply Assistant	3	(2)
Leading Supply Assistant to Supply Petty Officer	1	(0)
Cook (S) to Leading Cook (S)	1	(2)
Leading Cook (S) to Petty Officer Cook (S)	2	(2)
Petty Officer Cook (S) to Chief Petty Officer Cook (S) ..	1	(0)
Steward to Leading Steward	1	(1)
Cook (O) to Leading Cook (O)	1	(0)
Leading Cook (O) to Petty Officer Cook (O)	1	(0)
Petty Officer Cook (O) to Chief Petty Officer Cook (O) ..	1	(0)

Transfer

Petty Officer to Acting Regulating Petty Officer	1	(1)
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15. The health and discipline of the ships' companies have been satisfactory. In the case of H.M.S. "Achilles" it had been observed that there had been a gradual increase in the number of ratings suffering from tuberculosis, and action has been taken to have the whole of the ship's company X-rayed. Approval has also been given that future recruits for entry into the New Zealand Naval Forces are to undergo an X-ray examination as a matter of routine.

SECTION III.—PERSONNEL (ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE, NEW ZEALAND).

16. On 31st March, 1940, the strength of the Royal Naval Reserve, including officers and ratings of the reserve mobilized for service with the New Zealand Naval Forces was—officers, 20; ratings, 188.; an increase of 6 officers and 16 ratings in the year.

17. During the year 3 Royal Naval Reserve Officers completed gunnery, torpedo, and signal Courses at Flinders Naval Depot, Australia.

18. To date, 17 officers and 82 men of the reserve have been mobilized for service, and have been made available to relieve officers and men on loan from the Royal Navy.

19. The officers employed as Examining Officers at the defended ports have been granted Honorary Commissions in the Royal Naval Reserve.

SECTION IV.—PERSONNEL (ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE, NEW ZEALAND).

20. The total numbers borne on 31st March, 1940, including officers and ratings mobilized, were as follows : Officers, 83 ; ratings, 710.

21. To date, 43 officers and 499 ratings have been mobilized for service in the New Zealand Naval Forces and for training preparatory to draft overseas.

22. As from the outbreak of hostilities, recruiting for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve has been suspended, but five retired officers have been called up and 54 ex Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve ratings have been re-enrolled.

23. All ranks and ratings have displayed great keenness, increased training has been carried out at divisional headquarters, and every endeavour has been made to bring the sea training of officers and men up to date.

24. Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve personnel are employed in the local naval defence services at Auckland, Wellington, and Lyttelton, and partially to man the New Zealand Minesweeping Flotilla. A number have been appropriated to the cruisers to relieve active service personnel on loan from the Royal Navy. The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve has also provided 25 nucleus guns' crews for defensively equipped merchant ships, and officers and men are under training to form part complement of H.M.S. "Monowai" when she commissions. The balance of personnel not required for service in New Zealand has been placed at the disposal of the Admiralty for service in the Royal Navy. (They have since left for England.)

25. The equipment at the divisional headquarters has been maintained in an efficient state, and, in addition to its ordinary use, has been of great value in connection with the instruction of officers and men of the mercantile marine, overseas, inter-colonial and coastal.

26. The new headquarters building for the Otago Division at Dunedin is nearing completion and should be ready for occupation in May, 1940.

SECTION V.—CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES.

27. Civilian apprentices for various trades have continued their instruction at H.M. dockyard during the year. The largest number of employees on the books during any one week was 519 (323) and the smallest number 280 (115). The average number employed was 348 (263). The corresponding figures for last year are shown in brackets.

SECTION VI.—PROCEEDINGS OF CRUISERS OF THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES. *H.M.S. "Achilles."*

28. On 1st April, 1939, H.M.S. "Achilles," under the command of Captain W. E. Parry, RN., was on passage to New Zealand after recommissioning in England.

29. After calling at Aden, Colombo, and Singapore the ship arrived at Auckland on 8th May, when leave was granted to the officers and ship's company.

30. On 6th July the ship sailed from Auckland to convey His Excellency the Governor-General and Lady Galway to the Pacific Islands, visiting Rarotonga, Mangaia, Mauke, Atiu, Aitutaki, Penrhyn, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Puka Puka, Fakaofu, Nukunono, Atafu, Apia, Pago Pago, Suva, Nukualofa, and Niue, and she returned to Auckland on 18th August, 1939.

31. Immediately prior to the outbreak of hostilities, as stated in paragraph 6, H.M. Ships "Leander" and "Achilles" were placed under the operational control of the Admiralty, and H.M.S. "Achilles" left the New Zealand Station in August, 1939, for service under the control of Their Lordships.

32. On 13th December, H.M.S. "Achilles," together with H.M. ships "Ajax" and "Exeter" successfully engaged the German armoured ship "Admiral Graf Spee" and succeeded in driving her into the port of Montevideo, Uruguay. As a result of the action the "Admiral Graf Spee" scuttled herself on 17th December, just outside the harbour. Four ratings of H.M.S. "Achilles" were killed and three seriously injured during the engagement; the latter have since made a satisfactory recovery. "Achilles" sustained minor damage by splinters.

33. In respect of the action, His Majesty the King bestowed the following honours upon officers and men of H.M.S. "Achilles":—

Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath—

Captain W. E. Parry, R.N.

Companions of the Distinguished Service Order—

Commander D. M. L. Neame, R.N.

Lieutenant R. E. Washbourn, R.N.

Distinguished Service Cross-

Lieutenant G. G. Cowburn, RN.

Surgeon Lieutenant C. G. Hunter, RN.

Mr. H. T. Burchell, Gunner, RN.

Mr. E. J. Watts, Gunner, R.N.

Conspicuous Gallantry Medal-

Po/22169, S. J. Trimble, Sergeant, R.M.

Distinguished Service Medal—

W. G. Boniface, Chief Petty Officer, P/J.71495

W. R. Headon, Petty Officer, C/J.107927

A. Maycock, Petty Officer, D/J.88113

H. H. Gould, Able Seaman, N.Z.D.473

E. V. Sherley, Able Seaman, N.Z.D.1163

I. T. L. Rodgers, Ordinary Seaman, N.Z.D.1518

A. M. Dorset, Boy 1st Class, N.Z.D.1529

W. L. Brewer, Chief Petty Officer Telegraphist, N.Z.D.674

L. C. Martinson, Chief Yeoman of Signals, N.Z.D.345

L. Hood, Chief Mechanicain, N.Z.D.572

W. J. Wain, Chief Stoker, N.Z.D.477

G. H. Sampson, Chief Ordnance Artificer, C/M.37574

A. G. Young, Cook, N.Z.D.1570

Ply./22053, F. T. Saunders, Sergeant, R.M.

34. Subsequently, H.M.S. "Achilles" sailed for Auckland and arrived on 23rd February, 1940, to undergo refit and grant leave to the ship's personnel, and to resume service on the New Zealand Station.

H.M.S. "Leander."

35. On 1st April, 1939, H.M.S. "Leander" sailed for Sydney, arriving on 5th April. Strategical and other exercises were carried out with the Royal Australian Navy from 16th to 27th April. Returning to Auckland on 6th May, leave was granted subsequent to carrying out partial repair trials and high-angle firings. The ship sailed for Suva, Nukualofa, Rarotonga, Bora Bora, and Papeete, returning to Auckland on 10th August, 1939.

36. Exercises were carried out in Hauraki Gulf from 21st to 25th August, 1939.

37. Shortly before the outbreak of war, H.M.S. "Leander" left Auckland to convey the first reinforcements to Pacific Islands garrisons.

38. Since the outbreak of war, H.M.S. "Leander" has been employed on the New Zealand Station on patrol and escort duties.

SECTION VII—PROCEEDINGS OF THE ESCORT VESSELS AND H.M.S. "ENDEAVOUR."

39. H.M. Ships "Wellington" and "Leith" returned to New Zealand on 6th April, 1939, after combined exercises with the Royal Australian Navy. From 15th to 22nd April combined mine-sweeping exercises were carried out in Hauraki Gulf for the purpose of training Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve personnel. Both ships were docked between 26th April and 9th May.

40. On 16th May, H.M.S. "Wellington" sailed from Auckland for a visit to various ports in New Hebrides, New Caledonia, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and the Fiji Islands. His Excellency the

High Commissioner for the Western Pacific was on board for the majority of this cruise. The ship returned to Auckland on 30th August.

41. On 17th May, H.M.S. "Leith" sailed from Auckland for a visit to the Kermadecs, Tonga Islands, Fiji Group, and New Caledonia, and returned on 7th July.

42. H.M.S. "Endeavour" continued surveying the New Zealand coast until prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and was, until 5th June, 1939, working in the vicinity of the Bay of Islands. On that date she returned to Auckland to refit and to draw fair charts of the coast surveyed to date. The proposal to replace H.M.S. "Endeavour" by a more modern ship was postponed due to the outbreak of hostilities.

SECTION VIII.—H.M.S. "PHILOMEL"

43. H.M.S. "Philomel" continues to act as training-ship at Devonport, Auckland. It had been decided to reconstruct that ship for further service as an accommodation ship and for recruit-training, and to equip a post-recruit training school at Devonport, staffed from the depot ship. The reconstruction of H.M.S. "Philomel" could not be commenced until certain new buildings had been erected.

44. It was found, however, on fuller investigation, that the proposal to reconstruct the ship would involve heavy expenditure and considerable delay. This scheme has, therefore, been dropped, and it has been decided to construct a self-contained and modern set of buildings which will offer a standard of accommodation and comfort in conformity with modern ideas.

45. These buildings are to be erected on the land now used as a parade and hockey ground. The loss of the ground cannot be avoided, but during the year under review additional property has been purchased which will enable the Naval Base to be extended, and provision will be made for improved recreational facilities.

SECTION IX.—H.M. SHIPS "WAKAKURA," "JAMES COSGROVE," "HUMPHREY," AND "THOMAS CURRELL."

46. H.M.S. "Wakakura" has been continuously employed in training the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserves, and is now also the ship of the Senior Officer of the New Zealand Mine-sweeping Flotilla. The ship is in good condition both as to her hull and machinery.

47. Three fishing-trawlers, H.M. Ships "James Cosgrove," "Humphrey," and "Thomas Currell," have been taken up and commissioned for service as mine-sweepers; they were fitted out at H.M. Dockyard, Devonport, Auckland.

48. The trawlers "Southsea" and "Futurist" have also been fitted to act as mine-sweepers should the need arise.

49. The mine-sweepers are manned partly by naval reserves and partly by mercantile marine personnel.

SECTION X.—R.F.A. "NUCULA."

50. R.F.A. "Nucula" has been laid up since 5th July, 1937, and continues to be used as a storage hulk for oil fuel.

SECTION XI.—H.M. DOCKYARD.*

51. The usual periodical dockings and refits have been carried out during the year. Progress continues to be made with the reconstruction works. The new oil-tank was ready to receive oil on 3rd July, 1939, and has now been filled. The victualling store, machine shops, and signals

instruction hut have been completed. A new block of offices to accommodate the administrative and clerical staffs has also been completed and is now occupied. Considerable portions of the roads in the dockyard have been sealed.

52. New officers have been appointed in charge of the constructive and engineering branches of the dockyard.

53. Since the outbreak of hostilities, twenty-three merchant ships have been defensively equipped. Additional high-angle armament has been fitted in ten merchant ships which had been defensively equipped at ports outside New Zealand. Depth charges and chutes have been supplied to seven merchant ships. Routine inspections have been carried out in respect of all defensively equipped merchant ships visiting New Zealand.

54. The Government have requisitioned the Union Steam Ship Co.'s vessel "Monowai," and she is being fitted out as an armed merchant cruiser. Good progress is being made, but delays have occurred due to non-arrival of essential equipment, and to the refitting of H.M.S. "Achilles" and H.M.S. "Leander" being undertaken earlier than was anticipated.

55. As mentioned in Section IX, three fishing-trawlers have been fitted as mine-sweepers. These vessels are armed with a 4 in. and an anti-aircraft gun.

56. During the year the naval wireless station at Auckland has been transferred to a new site and re-equipped.

SECTION XII-NAVAL ARMAMENT DEPOT.

57. The newly-built naval armament depot at Kauri Point, Auckland, is functioning very satisfactorily. During the year the usual testing, receipt, and re-issue of ammunition for H.M. ships and services has continued. Large quantities of armament stores for H.M. ships and services have been issued since the outbreak of hostilities.

SECTION XIII-DRILLS, EXERCISES, AND TRAINING AFLOAT.

58. The normal progress of exercise and drills has been carried out, and intensified since the outbreak of war.

59. Prior to the war, exercises were combined, wherever possible, with the two Imperial escort vessels, and both before and since the outbreak opportunities of exercises with the Royal Australian Navy have been of considerable value to ships of the New Zealand Naval Forces.

SECTION XIV.-VISITS FROM FOREIGN WARSHIPS.

60. One foreign warship visited New Zealand, in March, 1940.

SECTION XV.-OTHER WAR ACTIVITIES.

Examination and Naval Control Service.

61. As soon as war seemed to be imminent, and actually before the outbreak of hostilities, the Naval Board established port-war signal stations, an examination service, and a naval control service at the three defended ports, which are Wellington, Auckland, and Lyttelton.

62. The signal stations are manned by men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In some cases the men were accommodated at first in tents; now, however, buildings have been erected in which they can live in comfortable conditions.

63. It is the duty of the examination service, in co-operation, with the military defences, to ensure that no enemy vessel can enter harbour undetected. This service, which continues day

and night, is maintained partly by men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and partly by Harbour Board pilots, and the ships engaged in the work are manned by the mercantile marine. At Auckland the service is augmented by naval patrol launches.

64. The principal functions of the naval control service are to ensure that merchant ships shall, so far as possible, proceed upon their lawful occasions in safety, for which purpose they are specially routed; and to deal, generally, with all matters affecting merchant shipping, including the organization of convoy. Most of this work is being performed by personnel of the New Zealand Naval Reserves.

65. Although not a naval service, it is not inappropriate here to mention the coast watching stations, over sixty (now reduced to under forty) of which were established at the beginning of the war around the coasts. They are manned by returned soldiers, men of the lighthouse service, and Harbour Board employees.

66. Mention should be made of the vital part which wireless and other communications play in naval defence. In this connection the Post and Telegraph Department has co-operated most successfully with the naval authorities.

Defensive Equipment of Merchant Ships.

67. Another very important item in the naval defence of the Empire and the protection of merchant shipping is the arming of merchant ships so that they can act in their own defence when attacked by the enemy on the high seas. The naval dockyard at Auckland has, up to date, equipped twenty-two ships with guns of 4 in. or higher calibre, and each of those ships has sailed from Auckland with a gun's crew the nucleus of which is formed by three seamen of the New Zealand Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In addition, seven overseas merchant ships have been equipped with depth charges. This work of arming merchant ships and manning their guns is continuing steadily.

Merchant Navy Defence Courses and Instruction of Personnel of the Mercantile Marine.

68. Prior to the war it was approved in principle to institute Merchant Navy Defence Courses in New Zealand, but for various reasons it was not practicable to provide the additional staff required.

69. Shortly before the outbreak of war the naval staff at Wellington was increased and arrangements were made, in conjunction with the shipping companies operating in New Zealand, to start a course as soon as practicable.

70. The object of the course is to inform officers of the merchant navy of, and to instruct them in, the measures employed to protect British and Allied merchant ships from enemy action in time of war. The course embraces lectures on the general principles of trade protection, defence against enemy submarines and raiders, and convoy organization, and includes practical instruction in gunnery, depth charges, and signalling.

71. The course in New Zealand is primarily intended for officers of the mercantile marine who are actively employed in the New Zealand coastal and inter-colonial trades. The attendances to date include approximately one hundred and fifty of these officers and, in addition, a number of master mariners who have retired from the sea but are ready to resume their profession if required. Officers of overseas ships visiting Wellington are also invited to attend.

72. At Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Dunedin facilities exist for the practical instruction of officers and men of defensively equipped merchant ships in gunnery, depth charges, and signalling. The response has been excellent and is much appreciated by the masters of overseas ships visiting New Zealand. At Auckland, in addition, special instruction in W/T matters is given to deck officers and radio operators. This work is carried out by the naval control service staffs.

SECTION XVI.-TRAINING POLICY.

73. A contract has been let for three small training-vessels somewhat similar to trawlers. These vessels are being built at Leith in Scotland, and will be armed with a 4 in. gun and smaller weapons and equipped for mine-sweeping and anti-submarine work.

74. These ships will be named H.M.S. "Moa," H.M.S. "Kiwi," and H.M.S. "Tui," and will, it is anticipated, be ready for service in about fifteen months' time. In addition to their training duties they should form a valuable addition to the naval defence of New Zealand.

75. During the year the policy of manning the New Zealand Naval Forces wholly by New Zealand officers and men has been steadily pursued so far as possible. The decision to undertake the training of recruits at the instructional establishment at Devonport is an important step in progress.

SECTION XVII.—NEW ZEALAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS.

76. It had been decided that H.M. ships on the New Zealand station would visit various ports in New Zealand during local Centennial celebrations. On the outbreak of hostilities these proposals were cancelled. H.M.S. "Leander," however, visited Waitangi during the celebrations connected with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, when the landing of Captain Hobson was re-enacted.

77. A naval display was also arranged in the Government Court of the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition at Wellington. Preparations had been made some considerable time in advance of the actual opening date of the Exhibition, but on the outbreak of hostilities the original display had to be considerably curtailed as staff and time were not available to prepare many of the exhibits. Models of ships, together with other items of naval interest, were obtained from England.

W. E. PARRY, Commodore,
Chief of the Naval Staff.