

**A PROUD RECORD**  
**An RNVR Division, formed in 1928 in Otago,**  
**Trained over 400 personnel most of who went to war in 1939**

The New Zealand Naval Board decided that there was a need for a Naval Volunteer Reserve to back up the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy.

This was trialed in Auckland in 1925 and extended to the other metropolitan centres in 1928. In Otago the post of Commanding Officer was offered to Commander Ernest F. Watson who had joined the RNR in Britain in 1906. Called up in 1914 he served in HMS *Philomel* in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf till he joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla as Navigating Officer. After the war he came ashore as stevedore in Otago Harbour. One of his first requirements was a building but he was lucky that one of his daily contacts was Keith Ramsay who ran a shipping company of that name. He had a building in Tewsley St. that he was more than pleased to rent out to the new Division at a yearly rental of £200. He gave so much support that he was made an Honorary Lieutenant and took part in many events.

The recruitment of officers came next. Arthur Welch was appointed as Executive Officer with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Over the years I have heard little about him with no stories but I would gather that he was a very fine man who ran an effective establishment for his captain. In 1940 he came out of naval retirement to become RNO Dunedin. Two doctors who came from the army were Arnold Perry (in WWII he served with distinction in *Achilles* and *Philomel* Hospital. After the war he rejoined Otago RNVR and retired as a Surgeon-Captain.) and Eric Harty (In WWII he was seconded to the RN.) Other officers also had army experience and were appointed as Lieutenants including Phillip Connolly (WWII: CO of *Deodar* and *Moa*, later Minister of Defence), Alexander Swanson (WWII: served in RN, CO of Otago RNVR 1946-51) and Freddy Fraser who had been a chef on HMS *Chatham* serving on the NZ coast from 1921. From 1936 to 1939 he was CO of the Otago Division and then of the Dunedin Sea Cadets in the war. In addition there were: Sub-Lt L.T. Paul, Lt. D.E.S. Mason, Paymaster Lt L.J. Black, Lt. W.H. Cadwallader, Lt. R.T. Roberts, and the Padre, Rev. W.A. Stevely.

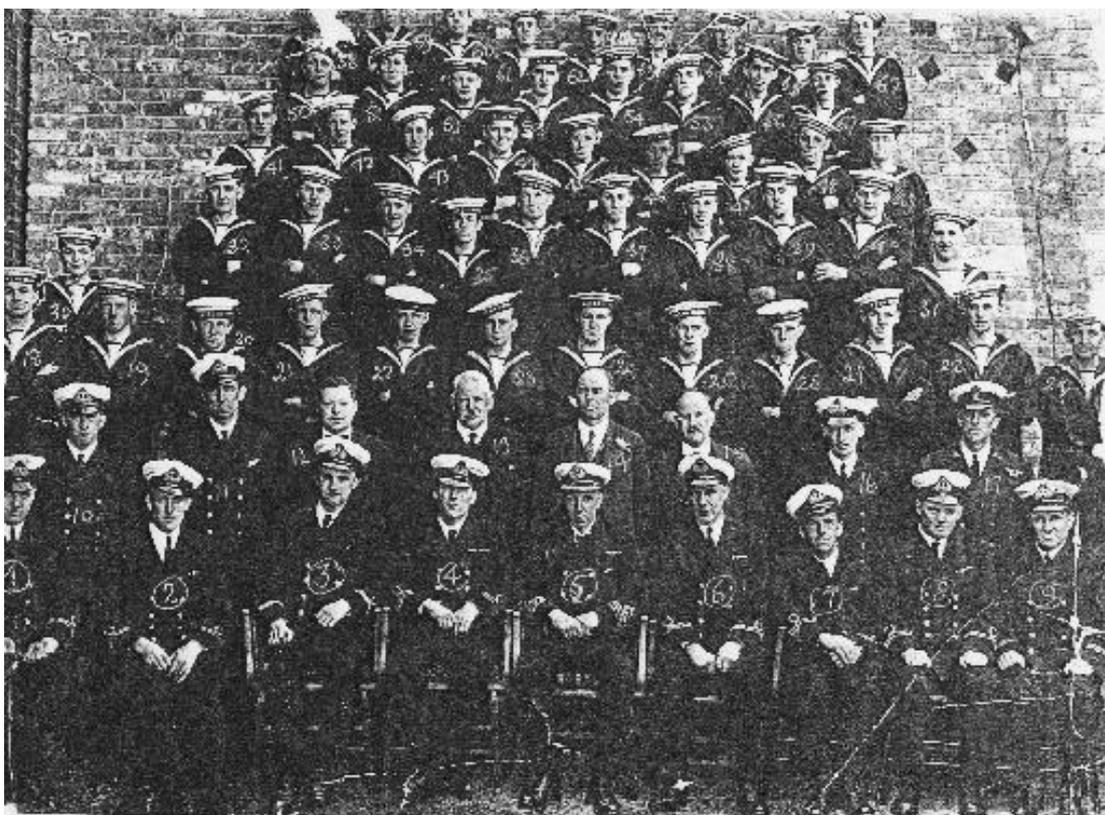
Officers promoted from the ranks were: J.H. Seelye 1930 and CO of *HMNZS Arabis*), A.A. Bell, 1932, B.M. Thomson, 1932 (lost in *Neptune*) and J.N. Allan, 1934 (WWII: Indian Navy and post-war CO of *Pegasus*.)

There were no volunteer senior rates from former servicemen from the Navy and so CPO "Jock" Carr was drafted down from Devonport as permanent Caretaker-Instructor. He fitted the job well and was greatly respected.

After advertisements calling for volunteers, interviews and medical examinations 67 recruits were accepted, nearly all in May 1928. Modern recruiters would be over the moon given such success. However, this age had no entertainment like Television to distract from this important hobby. The numbers did impose a problem for the cramped quarters at the Tewsley St. HQ which led to two parades, Monday and Wednesday with a ship's company parading each night. The wide streets provided good parade training on summer's evenings. In wintertime or on wet evenings the second story in the steel works opposite gave enough room for meaningful drills. There was a boatshed near the mouth of the Leith which held a whaler and smaller sailing boats for training purposes. In the HQ a three inch gun provided the necessary gun drill but in the later 30's ordinance staff from HMS *Diomedé* installed a bigger four inch. When in 1939 the gun was being dismantled for transfer to the new HQ in St. Andrew St PO Ivan Brown had the barrel in a sling Lt Cdr Lex Swanson entered and took over. Minutes later the barrel slipped out of the sling and crashed through the floor.

With admirable coolness he called out "Carry on, Chief" and walked out. For rifle training at the butts, Logan Park range was close at hand.

In stark contrast to today's media the newspapers then spent a lot of space on what was happening in the Territorial and Naval Volunteer units and they were very busy indeed leading to a high morale. This would have been a great assistance in subsequent recruiting



SHIP'S COMPANY 1929

This date is given because Lt Black was commissioned in August 1929 and none of the 8 ratings who joined in late 1929 appear in the photo, the names were arrived at with help from pre-war members but some names had to be withdrawn because they joined well after that date. The old fashioned caps soon disappeared when an enterprising group ordered the proper naval ones from England.

Back row : 58 Steve Petersen, 59 ?, 60 Jack Manhire, 61 Jack Eccles, 62 Jack Spence, 63 Allyn Finlayson, 64 Don Reilly, 66 Cyril Pettit.

Row 6: 50 ?, 51 George Lindsay, 52 Bill Ross, 53 ?, 54 Bob Spinner, 55 John Murray, 56 Allan Petersen, 57 Bob Cahill, 58 Steve Petersen.

Row 5: 41 Alf Wooton, 42 Eric Smith, 43 Len Slowley, 44 Jack Bardsley, 45 ?, 46 Stu Simpson, 47 Edward Jeavons, 48 ?, 49 George Simpson.

Row 4: 32 Jack Collier, 33 Harold Smith, 34 ?, 35 ?, 36 ?, 37 William Munro, 38 Andy Brown, 39 Bruce Thomson, 40 Jack Seelye.

Row 3 : 18 Colin Lindsay, 30 Norman Lindsay, 19 Gordon Hastie, 20 Alex Shanks, 21 Jack MacMillan, 22 ?, 23 Les Elliot, 24 Hugh Reddell, 25 Laurie Henderson, 26 ?, 27 Alexander Walmsley, 31 ?, 28 Ivan Brown, 29 Allen Bell.

Row 2: 10 S/Lt L. Paul, 11 Lt. P Connolly, 12 Mr. Roberts, 13 ?, 14 Hon Lt Keith Ramsay, 15 Mr. J Clark, 16 Lt Hugh Donald, 17 CPO "Jock" Carr.

Front Row : 1 Surg.Lt Eric Harty, 2 Lt W.Cadwallader, 3 Lt. L Black, 4 Lt. Fred Fraser, 5 Cdr. E.F. Watson, 6 LtCdr A Welch, 7 Lt Alex Swanson, 8 Lt. D Mason, 9 Surg Lt Arnold Perry.

There was a fairly high turnover especially in terms of the effects of a developing depression with ratings seeking jobs outside Dunedin. Of the 67 ratings who joined in 1928 36 transferred to List II at the end of their 3 year engagement or before. Only 8 joined in 1929 but in 1930 62 new ratings enlisted. In 1931 37 recruits came in followed by 16 in 1932. The next year brought in 47. 1934 saw an intake of 34. The records for 1935 are somewhat confused because of the change from an alphabetical enrolment book to a numerical book but there were about 15 recruits. From this date on there was a deteriorating international situation with Japanese attacks on China, Italian occupation of Abyssinia and German re-armament. 36 joined in 1936 and 38 in the next year. 26 were recruited in 1938 and 30 were signed on in June 1939 less than three months before the declaration of war. The RNVR Division must have been pretty vibrant to attract such numbers over ten years.



**Leading and Senior Rates Annual Mess Dinner 1938**  
**Back Row: ?, Bill Steele, ?, Ernest Brown Jack Salter.**  
**Middle Row : Stu Simpson, George Robb, Alan Kerr, ?, Hunter Partel,**  
**Theodore Richards, Roy Hook, ?.**  
**Front Row: PO John Macdonald, CPO "Jock Carr, PO Ivan Brown,**  
**CPO C. Smith, PO Les Ogg, PO Alyn Finlayson, PO Les Elliott.**

Some of the men who joined early played a part in wartime or post war naval life were Alyn Finlayson, post war CO of Sea cadets, Ivan Brown, stalwart member of the VR Association as was Frank Pattillo served in HMS *Maori*. Jack McDonald, cox'n of *Moa* and post war instructor at our VR.

These men were trained in the naval way of living, seamanship, sailing, gunnery, minesweeping, signaling and radio and power of command. The theory was taught in the HQ in Tewsley St and the practical on HMS *Wakakura* in the reservists' week sea training.

Ceremonial played a big part in the life of the Division. Their Annual Inspections demanded preparation and each year there was the turnout for the Anzac Day Parade. A big event was the opening by the Duke of Gloucester of the new Post Office in January 1935. Perhaps that event also marked the 25th Anniversary of the Coronation of King George V because there is no other report of a separate parade. In 1937 was the Coronation of King George VI at Tahuna Park. The Naval Reserve under the command of Lt.Cdr. P.G. Connolly made a brave showing in the middle of a flood of khaki. Lt Cdr Swanson had the embarrassing situation, being of short stature, of driving his sword into the ground when doing a magnificent sword salute in the march past and sort of doing a pole vault over it.

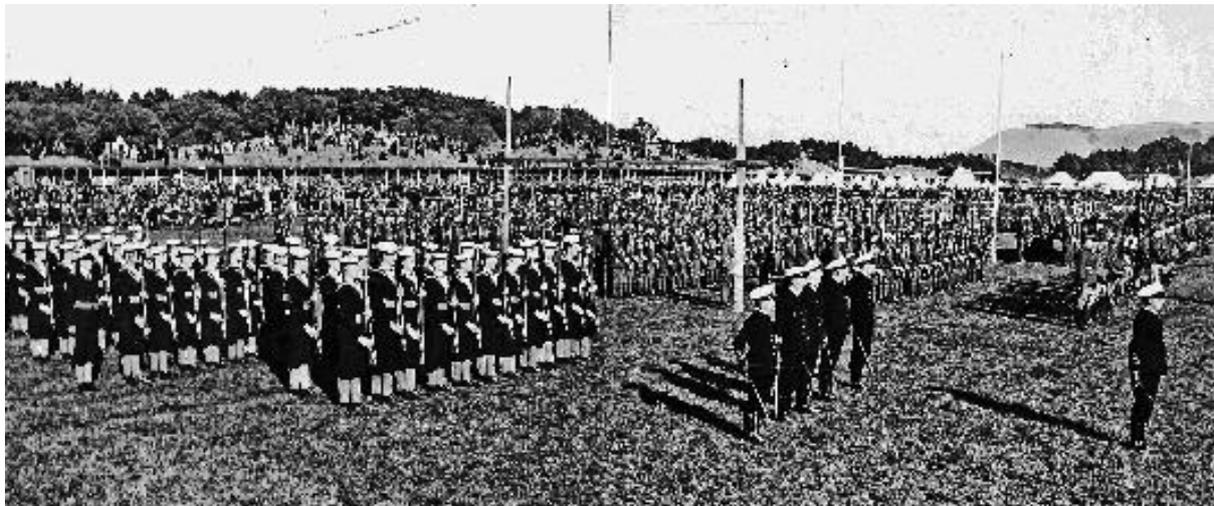
Given the customs of the times dances were frequent events—"hard-up" dances were frequent in the depths of the Depression and these often concentrated in the times of the training visits of *Wakakura* and of the cruisers to Dunedin. The Grand Naval Ball with nautical and naval decorations in the Town Hall was a great annual event. P.G. Connolly was a strong believer in "officer territory" at the ship dances and ordinary sailors were forbidden its precincts. However, the sailors got round that by a constant stream of the sailors crossing the dividing line to ask the officers' wives for a dance. This strong social sense gave unity to the Reserve Division.



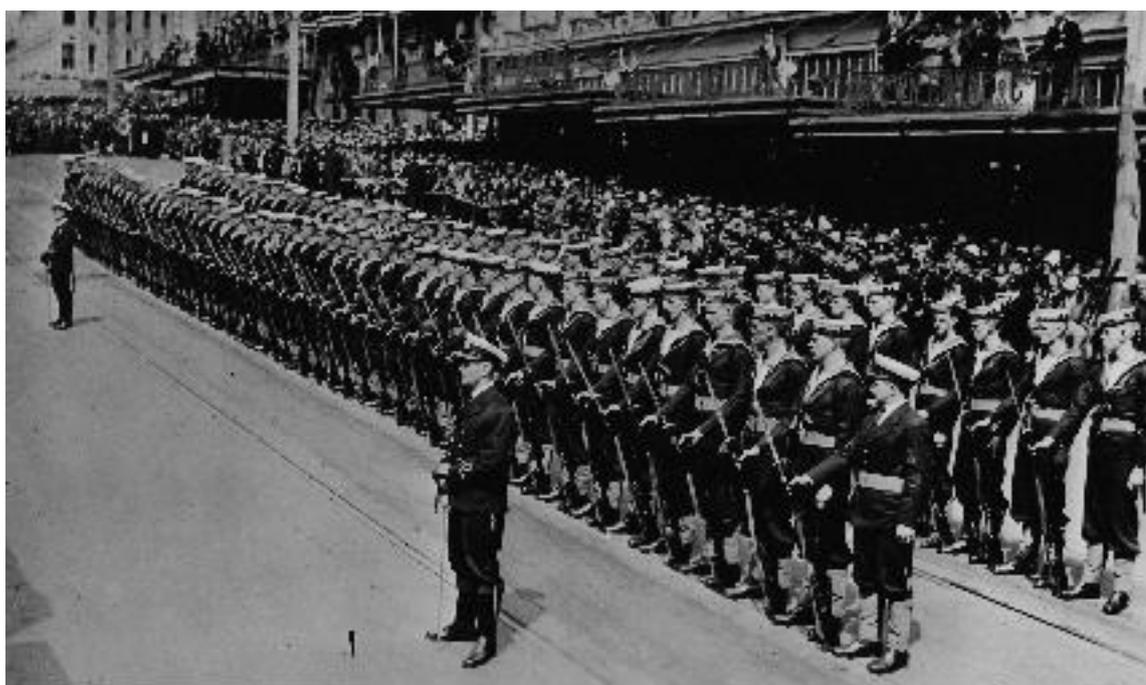
Some of the names of people in the later period were Jack O'Keefe, wartime commission, Richard Salter, commissioned and serving in the Indian Navy, Frank Partel who helped to train the younger seamen before they joined the *Aquitania*, 22 of whom lost their lives in HMS *Neptune*; Lindsay Taylor who "stole" our *Leander* deck plaque for us; Jim Leckie who won the DCM for bravery in the convoy battles in the UK East coast and also lost his life in *Neptune*. He went to war on the first anniversary of his marriage. His wife has been a widow for 69 years! J.B.Allan returned to the VR after the war and served till the late 60's as CPO. Harry Beaumont was a keen VR Association member as were Vic Daniel, (till a late age he drove up from Invercargill for the AGM and back again on the same night), Bill Honeybone, James Gould, Keith Laidlaw, Harry Latimer and Dick Malthus. Three ratings who achieved officer rank from HMS *King Alfred* were "Honi" Gillon, served in HMS *Naiad* and in ML's, XO *Toroa* 1952-62, Tom Roydhouse, served in HMS *Leith* and then in *Kiwi*, CO 1963-4 and Viv Kempthorne, served in HMS *Hussar* in Arctic waters and then in the battleship *Anson* with LtCdr.R.E Washbourn as his departmental head, CO of HMNZS *Pukaki* and Commander of *Royalist*, Lennox ("Dusty") Millar was commissioned from the ranks in 1939 and commanded various minesweepers in NZ waters was CO *Toroa* from 1951 to 1963.

This proud record of these men keen in their training which met the tests of a long and bitter war should be a great lesson to succeeding generations of Reservists.

Neil Howard, Curator of the RNZNVR Association.



**CORONATION OF KING GEORGE VI PARADE AT TAHUNA 1937**



**ROYAL GUARD FOR OPENING OF THE  
NEW CHIEF POST OFFICE BY THE  
DUKE OF GLOUCESTER 1935**