



170802 AGM  
Notification 2017.doc



Northland Lunch  
September 2017.doc

## **NGAPONA EX MEMBERS ASSN – LONGCAST**

18 August 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Hobsonville RSA

27 August 17 – HMNZS Ngapona Ex Members Assn AGM at 1500 at Pt Chevalier RSA

15 September 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Birkenhead RSA

17 September 17 - Northland Lunch, Bay of Islands Yacht Club, Waitangi

24 September 17 – NZ National Armed Forces Day

6 October 17 – RNZN Communicators 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Navy Museum

20 October 17 – Trafalgar Day Lunch at Te Atatu RSA

20 October 17 - Old Salts Lunch at New Lynn RSA

17 November 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Titirangi RSA

15 December 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Orakei RSA

Hi Folks

### **LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WILLIAM EDWARD SANDERS VC, DSO, RNR**

This month will mark 100 years since LT Cdr William Edward Sanders RNR was killed in action during the Atlantic U-boat campaign of World War I. Lt Cdr Sanders was born in Takapuna in 1883 and to date remains New Zealand's only naval Victoria Cross winner. HMNZS Ngapona will join with TS Leander to conduct a brief service to remember the life of Lt Cdr Sanders on the morning of Sunday 13 August at the site of his memorial in Takapuna.

The VC was awarded for the engagement between HMS Prize and the German submarine U 93 on 30 April 1917.

#### **History**

Born to Emma Jane and Edward Helman Cook Sanders in Auckland on 7 February 1883 William Edward Sanders, known as Billy, attended first Nelson Street School and then Takapuna School. In 1897 he was apprenticed to a mercer, but by 1899 was a cabin boy on the small coastal steamer Kapanui.

By 1910 he had passed for third mate, having seen service on several ships, both sail and steam. In 1914 Billy was mate of the barque Joseph Craig engaged in the trans-Tasman timber trade, when that ship was wrecked off Hokianga in August 1914.

The ship arrived in Glasgow in April 1916 and Billy immediately reported to the Admiralty where he was granted a commission as a Temporary Sub Lieutenant on 22 April, his date of birth being noted as 7 April 1887. He was immediately posted to HMS Excellent in Portsmouth for a six week gunnery course. From Excellent Billy was appointed to HMS Sabrina II the depot ship for the patrol force at Milfordhaven, for "Special Service". April, his date of birth being noted as 7 April 1887. He was immediately posted to *HMS Excellent* in Portsmouth for a six week gunnery course. From *Excellent* Billy was appointed to *HMS Sabrina II* the depot ship for the patrol force at Milfordhaven, for "Special Service".

The term "Special Service" covered the existence of Q-Ships or submarine decoy ships, the concept of which was that they were designed to look like merchant ships, but had concealed guns. When a submarine was sighted the crew would appear to panic and abandon ship, leaving a small party on board. Once the submarine was close enough, usually approaching while firing on the ship, the guns would be un-masked and they would sink the submarine.

Billy's first Q-Ship was HMS Helgoland which he joined in August, with the rank of Acting Lieutenant. Helgoland was a brigantine and was in the last stages of being converted to a Q-Ship. Billy was second in command of the ship and also gunnery

officer. Helogland sailed for the first time as a Q-Ship after dark on 6 September and at 1.30pm the next day sighted a submarine. This was the first of three inconclusive engagements on this patrol. Another inconclusive engagement took place on the next patrol, which was his last in that ship.

On 5 February 1917 Billy took command of HMS First Prize, a topsail schooner so named because as the German Else, it had been the first ship taken as a prize on the outbreak of war. When he joined the ship it was still being fitted out, which included the installation of two auxiliary engines and two 12 pounder guns. Billy was promoted to Acting Lieutenant Commander and First Prize sailed on its first patrol on 25 April, having been commissioned earlier in the day.

About 180 miles (360km) south of Ireland at 8.35pm on the evening of 30 April, U 93 was sighted and the ship went to action stations. The submarine was about 2 miles (4km) away and altered course towards First Prize, opening fire. The 'panic party' abandoned ship while the remainder kept to their stations, out of sight. Shells hit the ship and some near the waterline, put one engine out of action and caused water to pour in. At 9.05pm U 93 was 80 yards (73m) away and within the arcs of fire of the ship's guns. Billy gave the order to open fire and a hit was immediately scored on the submarine's after gun. The damage from this blew the U Boat's captain over the side, while another hit on the conning tower caused the submarine to begin to submerge. Sanders tried to close the range which by now was about 500 to 600 yards (approx. 500m) but the second engine gave out. The ship continued to fire, scoring more hits and the submarine settled by the stern. The panic party then rescued three members of the U Boat's crew, including the Captain.

With the submarine sunk all attention was now given to saving the ship. In this one of the Germans, a mechanic, actively assisted in getting one engine started and under full sail and the engine First Prize made for the Irish Coast. This was described as the classic Q-Ship action and for this Billy was awarded the Victoria Cross and all other officers and ship's company were also decorated. Following this action the ship's name was altered to simply "Prize".

The irony of this action was that although U 93 was seen to be hit and settle by the stern, it did not actually sink. Although badly damaged the First Lieutenant was able to successfully get the boat back to Germany and with it a description of Prize.

Repairs having been completed Prize was on patrol again three weeks later. On 12 June UC 75 was encountered. During the inevitable shelling one shell exploded near Billy, blowing him across the deck and inflicting two wounds on his forearm. Prize opened fire, but at long range and the engagement was inconclusive. However, again a description of the Q-Ship was obtained by the Germans. For this action Billy was made a member of the Distinguished Service Order, but was not alive when the award was made.

Other uneventful patrols followed, one in mid-July causing his investiture by the King of his Victoria Cross to be postponed. The strain was now beginning to tell and on 3 August Billy asked to be relieved, but before this could occur there was another patrol to be undertaken. For this patrol Prize left Milfordhaven with the British submarine D6 in

tow. Once the patrol area was reached the tow was released and the submarine was free to manoeuvre. On the afternoon of 13 August UB 48 was sighted and began to close Prize and opened fire. D6 attempted to get into an attacking position but without success. In the meantime Prize opened fire and believed at least one hit had been achieved. This proved to be on the signal mast of the submarine, which then remained submerged. Leutnant zur See Wolfgang Steinbauer was not going to let Prize escape. About midnight he fired two torpedoes, one of which struck Prize and caused a terrific explosion. All on board were lost.

After he was awarded the Victoria Cross the officers of HMS Prize gave him a presentation sword and this was given to his sister by the Governor General in June 1918, on the same occasion his Victoria Cross and Distinguished Service Order were presented to his father. Today Billy is remembered by the Sanders Scholarship at Auckland University, the Sanders Cup for sailing and a memorial in Sanders Avenue in North Shore City. His medals, sword and other items are in the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

*(Acknowledgement to the Torpedo Bay Navy Museum.)*

### **HMNZS NGAPONA EX MEMBERS ASSN - AGM**

The Ngapona Assn is holding its AGM on 27 August at the Pt Chevalier RSA - see attached flyer.

### **NORTHLAND LUNCH - BAY OF ISLANDS**

The Northland lunch is being held on 27 September at the Bay of Islands Yacht club, Waitangi. See attached flyer.

### **CNS #7**

#### **Rear Admiral John McBeath, CB, DSO, DSC, RN – CNS May 1955 – February 1958 Royal New Zealand Navy - Chief of Naval Staff & First Naval Member**

Rear Admiral John E.H. McBeath RN was born in the Transvaal, South Africa, on 27 September 1907, and educated in the USA at the Hilton College, Natal.

He joined the Royal Navy at Simonstown as a fourteen year old boy sailor in 1921. He served on HMS Hood as OD and AB for three years and was promoted to Warrant Officer rank in 1928. McBeath was CO of Venomous in May and June 1940, the most dramatic period in her history when the Welsh and Irish Guards were evacuated from Boulogne under close fire from enemy tanks and shore batteries and the BEF from the beaches and north mole of Dunkirk. After four months on the Harwich patrol Venomous was ordered to the Clyde and escorted the elderly carriers, HMS Argus and HMS Furious, with fighter reinforcements for the besieged island of Malta to Gibraltar. Soon after Venomous was transferred to Western Approaches Command and joined the First Escort Group at Londonderry John McBeath fell ill and was replaced as CO by Cdr H. Pitcairn RN on Christmas Eve 1940. McBeath went on to command HMS Oribi as part of the 17 Destroyer Flotilla escorting Arctic Convoys to northern Russia. After the war

he achieved Flag rank as Rear Admiral and after retirement in 1958 was Honorary Commodore of the Sea Cadet Corps and High Sheriff of Surrey.  
Rear-Admiral Mcbeath died on the 28 March 1982, having resided at his home at Bracken House, Crooksbury Hill, in Farnham, Surrey, England.

Ranks:

Able Seaman (1923)  
A/Mate 01.12.1928  
Mate 04.12.1929, seniority 01.12.1928  
S.Lt. ?, seniority 01.12.1928  
Lt. 01.12.1931  
07.03.1932, seniority 01.10.1931  
Lt.Cdr. 01.10.1939  
Cdr. 31.12.1941  
Capt. 31.12.1945  
Cdre. 2nd cl. 27.01.1953  
R.Adm. 07.07.1955 (retd 07.07.1958)

Decorations:

16 Aug 1940	Mentioned in Despatches (MID)
27 Aug 1940	DSO
6 Jan 1942	DSC
1 Jan 1957	CB

Warship Commands:

Ship	Rank	Type	From	To
HMS Venomous (D 75)		Destroyer	8 Jan 1940	23 Dec 1940
HMS Oribi (G 66)		Destroyer	1 May 1941	23 Feb 1943

Take care

**Jerry Payne**

021 486 013

President

HMNZS Ngapona Ex Members Assn Inc

*"There are good ships, and there are wood ships, the ships that sail the sea."*

*"But the best ships are friendships, and may they always be."*

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