

# HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

## LONGCAST

17 August 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Henderson RSA

18 August 18 – Navy Club AGM at Remuera Club

21 September 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Howick RSA

29 September 18 – Comms Assn AGM - Birkenhead RSA commencing at 1100

5 – 7 October 18 – RNZN Cooks & Stewards Reunion, Birkenhead RSA

19 October 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at New Lynn RSA

Hi Folks

### **HMNZS NGAPONA ASSN AGM**

The Ngapona Assn held its AGM last Sunday. It was well attended and we enjoyed a pleasant social gathering afterwards, finger food was supplied.

The committee remains unchanged:

President - Jerry Payne

Secretary - Shaun McAuley

Treasurer - Terry Creagh

Committee - Wayne Smith

Committee - Richard Maddix

Committee - Bob Mohammed

CO's Rep - Lt Cdr Nigel Heslop

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

On 12 August 1966 the first of two cross-harbour Liberty Boats were launched, *Matamua*, followed by *Mahanga* some six months later. Designed by the constructor Manager, Gavin Apperley, and built in the Dockyard, they took over the run between Philomel and Admiralty Steps formerly undertaken by the *Taihoa* and two unnamed craft called the 'Liberty Boat' and the 'Old Stores Boat'

In English *Matamua* means 'first born' and *Mahanga* means 'twin'.



The liberty boat 'Mahanga'

### **A NAVAL CAREER IN THE EYES OF COLIN ROSS - Pt. 41**

In my memory 1993 was a year of surveying a lot and also spending a lot of time underway at sea. It started with a bit of maintenance then off to the Bay of Islands for Waitangi day. We were not deeply involved in the ceremonial part but the ship's boats seemed to be in constant demand to transport people around.

As most people remember one of the highlights of the ceremony at Waitangi is when the ships in the bay illuminate after sunset. We were sitting bow on to Waitangi with the wind and tide, most other ships had the ability to flash up main engines and with their big propellers utilising one engine ahead the other astern could bring the ship's head around to be beam on to illuminate and be spectacularly visible to the shore when they illuminated.

Unfortunately, although we had main engines running, the wind and tide would not allow the bow to come around, although the ship had a bow thruster that of course is too close to the anchor to have any effect. So the decision was made to lower the Rhib and

use it much as a tug boat by pushing on the stern from the hidden side of the ship to assist the engines and position the ship correctly to illuminate.

Another memory from that year was the survey off an island south of Tonga. As most people will remember, MONOWAI had a single beam sounding system that transmitted a beam directly down below the ship to get a depth sounding. To chart an area the ship would run lines. This would require the ship to motor on a bearing usually for approximately an hour then turn and run a parallel course about 500 or so yards from the last line thus giving some idea of the terrain on the ocean floor and enable a picture/chart to be produced as a result. Perhaps not quite that easy but never the less, that's the basic idea.

So we were doing this south of Tonga for about a week. I distinctly remember that every morning getting up and out the window, (Yes old salts it was a square window in the cabin as opposed to a scuttle), and the only change would be that the island seemed to be a little closer.

The ship surveying was a tad boring and seemed to be made up for the Engineers to consist of many hours of watch keeping. MONOWAI was a bit different in that the engine control was run from the bridge, so as the CPO on watch once the engines were running and a functional check was carried out by local control then the control was passed to the bridge and all engine movements were carried out from the bridge. This meant that the CPO in the engine room effectively just became a monitoring job so it tended to be a bit monotonous unless something happened.

The ship had a basic Machinery Control Room (MCR), which at least reduced the background noise. One of the things that kept you on your toes was that in running lines when the ship reversed its course quite often especially the wind would change the heel of the ship so you would spend time pumping ballast out of one side of the ship and putting ballast water into the other side to keep the ship upright. Sometimes in heavy weather with a good blow this was a challenging balancing act.

One of the exciting or should I say frightening experiences was when one of the young lads overflowed one of the lub oil storage tanks. It was a tank on the same level as the MCR. This tank was just outside the Main Switchboard. When it was discovered it was with horror that the oil was deep enough to flow into the Main Switchboard. As you can imagine the switchboard was live and this was made worse in that we had a generator running to supply the ship's load. So here we had oil sloshing around the deck in the switchboard with a lot of live switches activated. Not an ideal situation.

Luckily we managed to bail it out but not before the ship had fire parties organised and a lot of firefighting gear at the ready. It was probably one of the scarious moments in a life at sea. It created an inquiry and the closer enforcement of Engineers Standing Orders in all future fuel or oil transfer situations. These things often reinforce why orders are written and compliance with them should and normally is enforced, however familiarity often breeds contempt and it is often these types of incidence, which makes people sit up and take notice again.

We also went north to carry out a survey of Penrhyn Island. This is one of the typical island atolls. A lagoon almost completely surrounded by a strip of land not very wide and no high points. We were there to survey the narrow entrance to the lagoon through the reef, and also some of the area inside the lagoon. This of course was small boat work as the water was not deep enough to allow the ship inside the reef.

The first day there the boats went away to work and the ship attempted to anchor. As most people will be aware that normally the seaward side of these reefs dropped away very steeply. Although the ship managed to anchor, when the wind changed or blew from the wrong direction the ship was perilously close to the reef.

The decision was made that while the boats were inside the reef surveying the ship would remain under way outside the reef to ensure the ships safety. Even better than that it was decided at night the ship would motor off shore about twenty or so miles and then main engines would be shut down and we would drift overnight. The Engineers were all for this as it meant the CPO was not required down below.

So overnight from when we shut down to approximately 0500 the next day the only requirement for us was to be on call and do a set of machinery rounds during your watch. The greatest middle watch anyone could ever keep. Was so good just having to get up and have a wander through the machinery spaces then back to bed.

We were there for I think a couple of weeks before we had an important engagement at Nauru Island. We were to be a floating Hotel for the Pacific Island Forum. So we motored for a week across the Pacific to get there. Unfortunately the four days we were there it was windy and although not too rough were bad enough to cancel the cocktail party planned on board and a few other requirements of us being there. The long and the short of it was that it was a waste of time us being there so the crew was pretty frustrated after the long trip across to effectively achieve nothing whilst there.

From Nauru we motored back slightly south to Fiji for an R & R break. We had been by this time at sea some thirty days so letting the crew loose in Suva created the usual party atmosphere that sailors in those days were noted for. After three days of letting the hair down a bit we departed and cruised back to NZ.

I guess I should also remark that MONOWAI had a mixed crew. At that time she was operating with about twenty women crewmembers. This was the first ship and a test for Women at Sea policy that is of course now a natural phenomena and expectation.

However this was the first time I had also been at sea with female crewmembers. I must admit I was originally sceptical about how it would work, but this experience converted my old thinking into acceptance that it was both workable and they provided the same or better outputs than a lot of the males we had in the past served with. It was not without challenges either. The messing arrangements of course had to change to provide separate ablution areas. Of course MONOWAI was better suited to this having been partially a passenger vessel in its island trader days, but never the less it did take some adjustments with accommodating women into what used to be a closed male shop.

I know acquaintances quite frequently asked Kerry if she was worried about me being at sea with women in the crew. I think she delighted in informing people that I was old enough to be these girls father if not grandfather. And it was true and on occasions one of the young women would download an issue they were having with the expectation of some I guess fatherly advice. It did make life more interesting.

So we arrived back in Auckland to a bit of leave and maintenance before we were to depart for more adventures and surveying with the next experience of a Chatham Islands survey.

*To be continued.*



Take care

**Jerry Payne**

[Editor@ngapona.org.nz](mailto:Editor@ngapona.org.nz)

021 486 013

Editor

HMNZS Ngapona 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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