

# HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

## LONGCAST

27 October 18 – Exercise Long Look Lunch  
10 November 18 – Armistice Day Remembrance Cruise, William C Daldy  
11 November 18 – Armistice Day  
9 – 12 November 18 - Engine Room Branch Reunion, Rangiora  
16 November 18 – Ngapona Assn Lunch at Grey Lynn RSA  
17 November 18 – HMNZS Ngapona Wardroom Mess Dinner  
23 November 18 – Change of Command, HMNZS Ngapona  
29 November 18 - Change of Chief of Navy  
7 December 18 - Weapons Electrical Reunion at SRFM  
7 December 18 – 8<sup>th</sup> Maritime Societies' Annual Dinner, Northern Club  
21 December 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Orakei RSA

Hi Folks

### **EXERCISE LONG LOOK LUNCH**

Exercise Looong lunch is scheduled for 27th October 2018 at O'Hagens Irish Bar in the viaduct with a 1200 start.

### **EX HMNZS PAEA REQUIRES SOME HELP**

We're looking for some helpful advice on the Foden charging system - in particular THE RECTIFIER. We have lost all charge - alternator is fine so the problem appears to be with the rectifier. Anyone out there from the ML days that could help us - would love to hear from you. If you can help, please contact Heather - [paea3552@xtra.co.nz](mailto:paea3552@xtra.co.nz)

## DID YOU KNOW?

On 23 October 1943 Lt Cdr CG Palmer, DSC\*, MiD, RNZNVR was badly wounded when his ship, HMS *Cromarty*, was mined and sunk in the Straits of Bonifacio, between Corsica and Sardinia. The Charles Palmer building in the Devonport Naval Base is named after him.

Born 30 April 1910, Charles Palmer (or Bunty as he was known) joined the RNVR as an Ordinary Seaman as soon as he was able to on 4 February 1929. He was promoted to an Able Seaman in July 1929 and commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant on 19 June 1931. He carried out sea training on HMS *Wakakura* in 1931 and 1932.

By 1939, Bunty Palmer was running a successful Gymnasium business in Auckland with six locations. In 1939, officers in the RNVR (NZD) were expected to attend 2-3 parades per week and assist with the instruction of the ratings. They would also attend Saturday afternoon classes with their men. Lieutenant Bunty Palmer was called up for duty on 9 September 1939 while he was at the Keane Navigation School held in the Ferry Building in downtown Auckland on a refresher course. He passed the second navigation examination as well.

In May 1940 all RNVR officers were called up for active service. Lieutenant Palmer left for England aboard *Empress of Japan* with 27 RNVR officers (including J.G. Hilliard) and 200 ratings in a draft sailing with the Second Echelon. On 27 October 1941, Palmer was appointed to command HMS *Cromarty*, a Bangor-class fleet minesweeper launched in 1941 as part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla. He was the first Lieutenant RNVR to have a command of a fleet minesweeper. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander on 20 February 1942.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Flotilla was then assigned to the fleet supporting the invasion of Sicily, Operation HUSKY. The Flotilla's two divisions were assigned to Operation HON ONE. From 9 July, Palmer's Division of four minesweepers (HMS *Cromarty*, *Seaham*, *Boston*, and *Poole*) along with trawlers and motor launches swept the approaches to Syracuse, Augusta, and Catalina, and carried out ASDIC patrol around the anchored transports. On 12 July 1943, the *Cromarty* and *Seaham* captured the Italian submarine *Bronzo* and 36 of her ship's company assisted by the cruiser HMS *Uganda*. *Cromarty* attacked a second contact with HMS *Pendant* joined by HMS *Poole* and successfully sank a second Italian submarine. Later on, HMS *Boston* and *Poole* attacked a third contact without success.

On 19 September 1943 Palmer's Division opened the Italian port of Crotona. For this, and his work during Operation HUSKY sweeping the channels into Syracuse and Augusta, Palmer received second Mention-in-Despatches for gallant and distinguished service and untiring devotion to duty in operations which lead to the capture of Sicily by Allied forces. On 23 October 1943, while sweeping the Strait of Bonifacio between Sardinia and Corsica in preparation for the landing on the southern French coast, HMS *Cromarty* struck a mine and sunk with the loss of 25 of the ship's company. Palmer himself was severely injured after being blown off the bridge and onto the after gun position. He was evacuated to a hospital in North Africa, passing through another six and a trip on a Canadian hospital ship there before being transferred to Sherborne Naval Auxiliary Hospital at Dorset on 24 December 1943.

On 16 April 1946, Bunty Palmer was discharged and demobilised as physically unfit for Naval Service. He was formally awarded his DSC and Bar on 1 May 1947 in Auckland. On 16 April 1948 he was promoted to Commander in recognition of his 'distinguished war record and the especially good service [he] performed in the interest of the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve' and placed on the Retired List of officers of the RNZNVR.



*HMS Cromarty*

### **A NAVAL CAREER IN THE EYES OF COLIN ROSS - Pt. 51**

Whilst in Beijing we did all the tourist things including The Great Wall of China, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Temple of Heaven plus a myriad of different eating-places. The funniest thing was we were in a restaurant and it was of a pretty good standard. Ali & I ordered a beer and it turned up with the top on. No screw caps here so we asked the young waitress if she could open it for us which she promptly did by stepping back and opening both bottles with her teeth. We then flew down to Yichang and had four days on the Yangzi River. This included transiting the locks at the Three Gorges dam. The dam is huge and it was quite an experience going through the lock system. They just ordered thousands out of their homes when they flooded the dam. Now they have control of the river flows all year but one of the issues from that is the lower lands don't get flooded annually so they are missing all the silt on the farm lands which is affecting production. From Chongqing we flew to Xi'an. This was to visit the Terracotta Warriors. It is just a mind-boggling experience, all housed in a building the size of a large aircraft hangar. There are just rows of these terracotta warriors lined up in their formations. There are some that have been removed as examples and are in glass cases where you can walk around them. The amount of detail is just staggering and reputedly no two faces are exactly the same.

From there we went on to Shanghai. I was a bit disappointed as I had read so much about the history of the city but was surprised at how small the French Quarter was and some of the other areas. My expectations had been something larger and more dramatic, however it was a pleasant experience and we enjoyed our stay.

From Shanghai we flew to Japan for the Golden Oldies Rugby. We took the high-speed train out to the airport. It was pretty amazing and when it left the station it was almost like taking off in an aircraft. When you are doing 400+kph it didn't seem like that fast until you noted you were flying past cars on the motorway, which were probably doing in excess of 100kph.

The week of rugby in Fukuoka was hard going. We had three games in five days. The second and third games were notably hard as we had Japanese teams and they had a few young players to make up the numbers. These young guys were like kamikaze pilots; they came in at a hundred miles an hour and tried to flatten you. Allied to this with the injuries I ended up playing a full game for the last game so was pretty knackered at the end of it.

Kerry and I then had a week touring our way up to Tokyo and flight home. The first stop was Etajima. This is an island off Hiroshima. I was keen to go back as we had anchored off here in 1970. The island was much as I remembered it but for the thousands of tourists now visiting it. We went to Hiroshima and toured the Peace Museum and park. It truly is worth the visit and is just hard to imagine what happened that day and the terrible misery and the ongoing problems the bomb created. We then travelled to Kyoto and really enjoyed our stay here, the history is fascinating, and the shrines and temples are amazing. We left there and went inland to Takahama on the other coast. This was relaxing and we spent a lot of time just walking around observing everyday life. From there it was back on the train and destination Tokyo. In Tokyo we were staying in Shinagawa. This is really on the southern outskirts. We knew our hotel was just across the road from the station but no one had warned us how big the station was. As luck would have it we got to the exit and looked around but couldn't see a hotel. Asking some bystanders we discovered they were lost as well. After a bit of looking at maps and the station layout we finally found the correct exit and hey presto there was our hotel just across the road. The hotel was pretty impressive. We were in one wing of it and there were about twenty check in desks just for our wing. We were on the twenty-sixth floor. Deciding to go for a walk we exited the hotel and walked for about ten minutes before the crowds got too much. There are just so many people you feel overwhelmed.

Tokyo airport was also impressive but well organised as most things are in Japan. It is easy to see why the Japanese have always looked down on the Chinese. China is so big, dirty and disorganised where Japan is clean and highly organised. We arrived home at the end of our five weeks very tired but had so enjoyed our travels. Of course the over riding fact was I knew I was coming home to a needed operation.

Going back to work for two weeks was a bit of a let down after the high tempo of the past five weeks touring. I had enough time to get up to speed on what had happened while I was away and then it was time to attend Nth Shore hospital and my appointment with the surgeon. Because of my fitness and health the operation was performed laproscopically. Basically the operation is done through a few small holes using a camera to guide the surgeon through the operation. This is not as invasive as the normal slice and dice and so the recovery rate is quicker. The surgeon informed me the next day that I was the fittest 60+ year old he had operated on, so all that rugby in Japan had a plus side.

So from the end of November 2012 till Mid January 2013 I was on sick leave. It nearly drove me up the wall as I was limited in what I could do, was not allowed to lift anything and this really made time dawdle by. Unfortunately when I went back to get my clearance to return to work there was more bad news. The cancer has transmitted outside the prostate so the next step was radiation. There were two things that this taught me. ! You never know what is lurking round the corner and 2 when I turned up for my first radiation treatment and saw the young age of some of the patients I realised that rather than being unlucky I was in actual fact very lucky as I had had a great 65 years prior to this.

The radiation treatment was I have to say no fun. It is to all intents and purposes the burning of the infected cells. There were thirty- two sessions and the first twenty-five were no issue but from then on the side effects were pretty drastic, however it was the way ahead and all I could do was keep working to keep the mind busy and think that the end was in sight and all would get better.

I have I think stayed pretty positive since then and every year is a plus. I have been a way more fortunate than a lot of people so it's a case of just getting on with life and enjoying every day. I have always been willing to share my experience with anyone suffering the same issues and believe discussion is better than depression.

Returning to work was a real bonus. Suddenly I was back in the fray. In 2013 TE MANA was deployed to the Gulf for seven months. We had a maintenance period prior to deployment, which again was a trying time as there were a lot of communication systems they needed and upgrades, however mid year she deployed on time. The best part of the first two months was arranging support for the vessel while they did a work up in Australia. Some of my best memories are of the amount of contacts we made supporting vessels around NZ and also deployed overseas. It is sometimes a challenge to find exactly the sort of firm you require to render assistance but the satisfaction when it comes to fruition is really great.

There was another side to my job, which came about when about 2010 and the ship was away, I got asked if I could organise the re-build of one of the old Mini Mokes. It had been given to the museum and originally Manakau Tech were going to undertake it as a project. This looked like something to get my teeth into and an interesting sideline. It was housed up at Tamaki Workshops. So I made arrangements to go up and have a look. Shock, horror it was just a shell with all the components chucked into boxes and not necessarily in any order. So started a process with a lot of help where the chassis

was cleaned and blasted, painted and then slowly the moke was re-assembled. I had a few run ins with museum staff over the restoration, I think basically they were concerned that the finished product was better than they wanted.

There were little things like the seat squabs were ripped and a couple were missing so I arranged for a new set to be made. When this was noted I was asked where the original ones were and of course after using them for a pattern we had thrown the old ones away. They wanted them kept! Also I had arranged for HMNZS WAIKATO insignia to be sign written along the side of the bonnet and also on the bonnet the Captain F11 badge, which I thought was pretty impressive. They were not happy with that either.

I actually thought it was important to recognise WAIKATO as she had the first moke presented when she arrived by the Hamilton City Council, also I thought the recognition of Captain F11 was also an important feature as these are no longer seen on the ships. However finally it was ready to deliver. Originally I wanted to drive it down and present it but with it going in to the museum we would have had to somehow remove all the residue petrol so it got too difficult and it was transported down and handed over at a little ceremony.

So when you see it in the museum remember that it took some effort to restore it to the state it is currently in and I hope all sailors when they see it will have great memories of the escapades that these little vehicles enabled to happen. They certainly changed the face of ship's transport for quite a few years.

*To be continued.*

Take care

**Jerry Payne**

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Editor

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*"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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