

HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

LONGCAST

16 November 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Grey Lynn Returned Services Club

17 November 18 – HMNZS *Ngapona* Wardroom Mess Dinner

23 November 18 – Change of Command, HMNZS *Ngapona*

29 November 18 - Change of Chief of Navy

30 November 18 – STEAMEX 18 at SRFM

7 December 18 - Weapons Electrical Reunion at SRFM

7 December 18 – 8th Maritime Societies' Annual Dinner, Northern Club

14 December 18 - Navy Club Lunch, Remuera Club

21 December 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Orakei RSA

25 December 18 – Christmas Day

26 December 18 – Boxing Day

18 January 19 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Swanson RSA

Hi Folks

ARMISTICE DAY

I hope you were able to commemorate Armistice in the appropriate manner. The two HDMLs ex HMNZS Paea and Kuparu both conducted wreath laying ceremonies, Paea in Whangarei and Kuparu in Auckland.



Paea wheelhouse table



Kuparu wheelhouse table



"I have the ship" - John Rust on the helm of *Kuparu*



Ceremony on *Paea*

NGAPONA ASSN MONTHLY LUNCH

Our lunch this month is at the Grey Lynn Returned Services Club, 1 Francis Street, Grey Lynn. This is the first time we have been to Grey Lynn for lunch and I have been assured that we will be made most welcome. Look forward to seeing you there this Friday at 1200.

DID YOU KNOW?

On 17 November 1924, Commander John Middleton was appointed Commander of the RNVR(NZ) at Auckland. In February 1925, additional officers were appointed and recruitment begun for ratings using the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron headquarters. Many of the first recruits were members of the RNZYS or other boating/sailing clubs. Recruitment for the NZ Division of the Royal Navy based at the Naval Base at Devonport was a struggle, in contrast with the rapid growth of the Auckland Reserve Division, later to be named HMNZS *Ngapona*.



HMNZS *Ngapona* circa 1930

A NAVAL CAREER IN THE EYES OF COLIN ROSS - Pt. 54

In 1965 a shy country boy left home for the first time and ventured to the big smoke joining the Navy. I would like to think that 54 years later that shy country boy hasn't changed much!

In those 54 years I have witnessed massive changes in both ships and the way they are serviced as well as manned. The pace of change has accelerated as the years have passed and what is the norm today will have altered by tomorrow.

When I joined it was to a Navy predominately in hammocks, broadside messing and very definitive boundaries in the rank structure. We initially signed contracts of eight or twelve years and there were very few ways to terminate those contracts.

One way was of course buying your way out but then very few of us had the means to do that, hence people will remember the notice board in the CRO flat with pictures of ratings absent without leave as this was one of the avenues men took to either remain outside or be discharged after serving twenty eight days over the hill, or in detention as it was.

To proceed on leave as a Junior Rate you would get dressed up in collar and tie with jacket and muster to be inspected before you were permitted to proceed ashore and of course you had to pick up your Leave Card and proceed ashore. As an Ordinary Rate you had to go ashore even in Auckland in uniform.

On my first sea draft, INVERELL, it was hammocks and broadside messing. There was no lying in after "Wakey, Wakey" as the crew would need the table under your hammock to eat their breakfast. In heavy weather there was always water sloshing around the mess deck. The galley would only serve soup, as it was too dangerous to cook on the oil fired galley range.

The boiler room was a closed stokehold and required entry through a system of doors creating an airlock. The main engines were triple expansion engines, which were pretty open and would be considered extremely dangerous in the current Health & Safety climate.

From there it was a posting ashore and living on-board in PHILOMEL. This meant that you were in danger of crash postings late at night as the Navy did the entire search and rescue call outs as there were no helicopters in those days. Indeed I suffered from two of these crash postings in the four or five months I lived on-board.

Thence I joined TARANAKI. What a big step up this was. My own bunk, cafeteria messing, so you actually ate in a dinning hall not your mess. The boilers were encased with in their own air supply so there was no airlock to enter the boiler room. The steam turbines were encased and there was very little exposed rotating machinery so a lot safer although the high pressure and temperature steam.

Of course in the Rothesay Class you still watch kept in the actual space with the machinery, the next step were the Y160 Leander's which had a Machinery Control Room and you were effectively isolated from the machinery although in the same area. The latest ships of course have MCR's that are remote from the machinery space and indeed most of the propulsion systems are now controlled from the Bridge. Now the crew are in mainly two, four or six berth cabins. Some of the vessels the senior people are in individual cabins with their own en suite. The crews have gone from 550 on ROYALIST to 250 on Leander's to 150 on ANZAC's. And the auxiliary fleet are manned even less, so that is a huge difference in crew numbers.

Other things I have noted are the familiarity between the ranks. It is a huge change from my days when all Officers only had one name, SIR!. Now it is disconcerting for the older generation to hear Officers on a first name basis with junior rates, however times change.

The other big change is of course communication. We were hugely reliant on mail. Even that was sporadic, as there were nowhere near the same numbers of airlines or indeed scheduled flights. So on occasions we would go weeks without news from home. There was often a news bulletin put up on the notice board with current news but it would be only the basic headlines and no depth.

When the ship left port you were basically on your own and self sufficient. Any machinery breakdowns then it was a matter of turning to and repairing it. The ships carried vastly more spares than they do today. On arrival in port the Engineering Warrant Officer or Marine Engineering Officer would arrange any support required from ashore. The modern fleet is hugely reliant on repair by replacement and a lot of the replacements are flown in to the next port of call and any shore support is now arranged beforehand from NZ.

Communications were one of the big pluses when as a Ship Manager you were trying to arrange for the upcoming maintenance. To be able to talk to the ship in real time on the other side of the world certainly made the preparation a lot easier. I think in all my time at sea I only received one Radphone call from Kerry. The comms office would advise you that one was arranged at a certain time and as you didn't know what it was about you always suspected bad news. Luckily it wasn't but it is really stressful while you wait.

The other huge notable change, amongst all the changes, are Woman at Sea. It is a long way from where we sailed in 1970 for the Far East and had 7 Wrens on-board for their one sea day. They were only travelling with us down to Browns Island where we ammunitioned before departing. This however created a lot of bad feeling among the families we farewelled on the jetty. It was just not seemly in those days.

Women at Sea are now well accepted, even I could see the need to be more modern in our thinking and they now form an intricate part of any crew from the new recruits right up to senior positions. However it has become I suspect, the Posting Officers nightmare. There are issues like a couple both in uniform with a family obviously both can't be at sea at the same time or on the same ship. This also has an effect on berthing arrangements that when a male or female crewmember replaces one of the opposite sex it may require existing crewmembers changing cabins to get the changed configuration right.

These days in any deployment there is a constant crew change going on. On arrival home from deployment there is probably only the core crew that has done the whole deployment. Some positions have been changed two or three times. Also crewmembers come home for births, deaths and many other issues. Originally when posted to a ship you were there for the two years and the crew becomes a close knitted family.

So there have been many changes and as I look back I think I served through a lucky age of no foreign wars so to speak. One of the idiosyncrasies is that I have an Operational Service Medal but am not recognised as a Veteran. I am not sure whether I can be bothered taking Veterans Affairs to task over it as there are more important things in my life but thought it was an interesting fact.

Well that sort of sums up my involvement with the Navy. So here I am now wearing glasses, using hearing aids, fighting skin cancer and having had prostate cancer, and have been diagnosed with asbestosis, but apart from that am fit and well still playing touch rugby and the odd game of Golden Oldies rugby, still involved in Junior Rugby so life is busy.

Summing the whole thing up, I have pretty much enjoyed my career. The only downside really was not seeing my children grow up through their young years and one of the reasons I have been as involved as possible in my two Granddaughters formative years.

I hope all who have read this have enjoyed it and look forward to catching up with all those old crewmates from yester years.

Sail well and sail safe

All the best

Regards

Colin

Colin, I would like to thank you for the effort you have made in relating your naval career over the last twelve months. I know many people have enjoyed reading your memoirs by the number of positive comments I have received. Once again, thanks and all the best for the future - ED

Take care

Jerry Payne

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