

# HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

## LONGCAST

28 January 19 – Auckland Anniversary Day  
6 February 19 – Waitangi Day  
8 February 19 – Navy Club Lunch, Remuera Club  
15 February 19 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Titirangi RSA  
8 March 19 - Navy Club Lunch, Remuera Club  
15 March 19 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Waiheke RSA  
18 April 19 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Henderson RSA (Thursday)  
19 – 22 April 19 – Easter Weekend

Hi Folks

### **NGAPONA ASSN BOATING WEEKEND**

Our 'Boating Weekend' was held last weekend. The attendance was not as good as I had hoped, perhaps it was too soon after Xmas, and the weather was not to everyone's liking. Anyway we mustered three boats including 'Buoy O Buoy' (Terry Creagh), 'Chianti' (Peter Goodwin) and 'Kuparu' (Scott Perry and crew).



## **A SAILOR DIED TODAY**

(From Jack Donnelly)

There is no doubt that many of you been inspired by the many poems, odes and 'passages' about sailors who have "Crossed the Bar" The words contained in some of these verses are so unique and special. I believe that we should look at composing our very own hymn to be sung at naval funerals of our matelots.

By taking the best and appropriate words from these poems to create a 3-4 stanza hymn, then putting those words to a tune will be the challenge.

I know there are ex matelots out there who have the required skills to write words for a hymn and others able to select the right tune for the hymn. However, it doesn't have to be a hymn as such, an old or modern song is also an option.

Whilst I am fully aware that the official Naval hymn is, 'Eternal Father- Strong to save'" which is a Royal Navy hymn, it would be nice if we would have our very own.

I will seek initial advice from Wayne Toleafoa.....(Former RNZN Padre) to get his opinion on the best way to proceed with this initiative. Look forward to your comments, feedback and volunteers of course. (Reply to this email)



Gunnery Choir

### **ANECDOTE #3 – THE ROCK, AN ISLAND PARADISE**

*PROLOGUE:* This is our third edition of short stories about HMNZS Tamaki on Motuihe Island that both Gary “Kips” Houghton and I are writing to keep the interest flowing and alive leading into the “Survivors of the Rock” reunion on 14-16<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

History will say that from 1941 to 1963 the island of Motuihe was inhabited for 22 years by the RNZN as a training base for its new recruits. Today there is nothing official on the island to say that we were there. It is our endeavour to ensure that in February 2020 we leave our ‘marker’ on the island to say, “WE WERE HERE.”

They came from the four corners of NZ, young, energetic, keen and in the hope of a new beginning in their lives as sailors. Some were straight out of school, for others it was their first job and a career in the Navy. Others had had previous employment, but found their jobs unfulfilling.

The motivators for joining were many and varied: a long held ambition or dream of being a sailor; following a family tradition; a desire to see the world; a chance to get away from home; a whisper in the ear by a local police officer or a choice suggested by a benevolent magistrate.

For many it was their first time away from home. There were those who had never lifted an iron, threaded a needle, worn shoes or owned a pair of underpants. A few had been sea cadets; others thrived in a military environment. Then there were those who could not handle the pressure or discipline, but for the majority, it was a whole new experience.

When you first caught a glimpse of this idyllic island in the middle of the Hauraki Gulf, with its beautiful beaches, palm trees on the foreshore, a white cliff and small boats moored to buoys, you thought that at last you were in paradise. But once you stepped onto the island you could almost smell its historical tradition and discipline. Whether you completed 3 months or 12 months the memories of your time and training on the ‘Rock’ never leaves you, it is engrained into your mind forever.

The training instructors were certainly “old school”. Some were ex-World War 2 veterans, others transferred across from the Royal Navy and then there were our own ‘home grown’ instructors. They ruled by fear and with an ‘iron hand’; instant discipline was enforced, the training was very structured and traditional. Some may well say that they were cruel, brutal or even heartless, but “fair and firm” are words that many “boys” would use to describe their instructors.

The training program focused on teamwork, hygiene, naval traditions, seamanship, ship knowledge, parade drill and physical fitness. Promotion was awarded to those trainees who displayed leadership skills and they became class leaders. Additional promotion for the Seaman Boys was to Petty Officer Boy and Instructor Boy.

Once described as “Gentle Annie” was the HILL, all 100 plus yards of it. The discipline practices that the instructors employed for trainees was endless: sprinting, frog hopping with hammocks or rifles, carrying buckets of sand up from the beach, 5.25” projectiles on the shoulder or whenever the trainees returned from leave inebriated. Besides the hill the toughest punishment was the dreaded Number 9s, which consisted of drilling with .303” rifles at the double early morning and night, additional work and stoppage of leave.

Four meals a day, breakfast, lunch, tea and supper were a pretty stable diet, but you didn’t dare to take any extras or down came a spatula - Wham!! Life and training on the island was not all hostile. There was a movie theatre where Sunday night features

were screened; tobacco was cheap; 'free to roam' was granted on Sundays - when the ferries arrived in summer time laden to the gunwales with ladies; a few hours liberty one day each weekend - to see the lights of Auckland, get acquainted with the "creatures of the night" and guzzle down cheap wine (snibos); there was also a variety of sports to play.

When the time came for trainees to leave the island there would have been feelings of satisfaction, maybe sadness or even emancipation. They had gone from boys to men, had quickly grown up, gained in confidence and found inner strength to survive. Most of them never returned to the island.

"Tell me and I forget,  
Show me and I remember,  
Include me and I learn."



"Boys on the Rock"

### **MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

The nation's 180 RSA clubs will not survive unless they find a way to be relevant to younger people, says an internal report carried out for the organisation.

Defence Minister Ron Mark has endorsed the urgent need for the organisation to change and says it has made good moves towards doing so.

Yet Mark and the RSA concede more needs to be done to ensure the organisation is meeting the needs for which it was created - support and welfare for those who serve New Zealand.

The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association was set up in 1916 by soldiers returning from the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign.

It now claims 182 local RSAs with around 100,000 members, having relaxed membership rules in recent decades to allow those who have never served in uniform to join.

The internal report by Christopher Hodson, QC was intended to probe structural issues within the organisation.

Instead, the report shows Hodson found members were concerned whether the organisation could actually continue to exist.

He said even though the concerns weren't part of his remit, he was compelled to report the comments because of "universal concern about the effect of the ageing process on the organisation, coupled with the need to increase younger membership". Hodson wrote: "The key word here is relevance. To survive at all the organisation needs to demonstrate relevance to the community and to recognise and meet the needs of those whom its existence is designed to support.

"These issues present as uppermost in very many if not all minds."

The RSA's founding purpose was to provide support and welfare for current and former service personnel. It has struggled to maintain the function with contemporary veterans while keeping its traditional bricks-and-mortar clubrooms afloat.

Hodson said a project needed to be developed to resolve the issues and to include Mark, as Minister of Defence, and the Chief of Defence Force.

He said "the primary aim is to ensure the survival of the organisation".

The RSA's greatest difficulty is considered to be engaging with the 20,000-plus contemporary veterans, who have served in Bosnia, Timor, the Solomon Islands, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

It isn't alone - Veterans' Affairs NZ has also stepped up efforts to connect with a group of service personnel whose coalition contemporaries are struggling with high levels of service-related emotional and mental injury.

Mark said he had made it clear to the RSA it needed to do more to serve the needs of contemporary veterans.

"The situation was not good. It was dire. All the indicators of failure were blinking like neon lights in Las Vegas. Everyone could see them."

Mark, who committed \$1 million in taxpayer funding to the RSA since becoming minister, said he believed the organisation had "turned a corner" and was heading in the right direction.

Innovations like the "Burnham hub", which put an RSA presence inside Burnham military camp, had proved an effective way of connecting with serving personnel, he said. It was being repeated at Linton camp near Palmerston North, and others where appropriate.

He said more change was needed, even in simple aspects such as decor in clubs reflecting the Great War and World War II.

"There is very little evidence in decor, music, atmosphere that would encourage young men and women of the day to walk through those doors."

RSA president Barry Clark said the issue was recognised and pressing.

"We need to look at changing our offering. We ourselves have acknowledged this some time ago and have been working very hard with our RSAs over the need to change."

Clark said the physical clubs would be a part of the organisation's future as it strengthened its support for those who had served.

"We need to acknowledge those who have served after Vietnam. Let us never forget we came from Gallipoli but let us also acknowledge those who are serving today."

A number of RSAs have financially collapsed across the country in recent years and most districts' annual reports record struggles to maintain patronage.

The Kerikeri RSA's recent annual report recorded the resignation of its president who did not want to "die in the saddle" as others on the executive had, and the drop in membership from 900 to around 660 people.

"What is the future of the RSA," its vice-presidents asked in the report. "Do we continue trying to get us back to where we were three years ago or do we have to relook at what we are doing?"

The report stated "we just cannot entice our members to use the club" despite lowering costs, setting up a darts club and running euchre evenings.



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2007, the Inshore Patrol Craft, HMNZS *Moa* and *Hinau*, decommissioned. *Hinau* P3556 was commissioned on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1985.



HMNZS Hinau Commissioning Crew - Can you name them?

Take care

**Jerry Payne**

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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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