

# HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

## LONGCAST

16 March 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Waiheke RSA

24 March 18 - Navy Open Day, DNB

24 March 18 - Kumeu Militaria Show, Kumeu Showgrounds

13 – 16 April 18 - HMNZS Otago and All ships Reunion, Poenamo Hotel, Auckland

14 April 18 – Book launch, ‘Sailors Against the Odds’ Ngataringa Sports Complex

20 April 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Onehunga RSA

15 – 18 June 18 – Greenies Weapons Electrical Reunion at Napier

Hi Folks

### **FROM THE SICKBAY**

Jim Blackburn has been in North Shore Hospital for a minor operation. If you want to message him, let me know and I will give you his number.

### **THE OLD AND NEW**

An historic event today as *HMNZS Hawea* departed Whangarei escorted by two HDMLs, *Paea* and *Kuparu*. We were hoping that TV3 would be on hand but they had to cancel at the last minute. *Hawea* launched their RHIB and photographed the event. Hope to have the photos for next week's newsletter. Many thanks to *Hawea* for their involvement.



### **NGAPONA ASSN MONTHLY LUNCH**

Our annual visit to Waiheke RSA is on Friday 16 March.

The Waiheke Ferry departs the downtown Ferry Buildings at 1100 - calls at Devonport, then we catch the Onetangi bus to Ostend.

Return catching the bus at Corner stop. Leaves 10 and 40 minutes past the hour.

Bring some friends, it is always a good day.

### **KUMEU MILITARIA SHOW**

The Kumeu Militaria Show is on Saturday 24 March at the Kumeu Showgrounds, 35 Access road, Kumeu, Auckland.

Starts at 0900 and is always a good show.

## **A NAVAL CAREER IN THE EYES OF COLIN ROSS - Pt. 19**

So in mid 1978 OTAGO deployed to the West Coast of the States. We were to do a full work up in Pearl Harbour and then in company with other unit's transition to Canada and the western seaboard. I was looking forward to this trip as I had been to Hawaii before but never Canada or the mainland USA.

Accurate positioning of ships in those days especially in overcast or foul weather was by a lot of dead reckoning. This point will become apparent in a later story however I can remember a trip to Australia on TARANAKI, the weather had been very bad the whole way across, the Navigator had us north of Sydney so when we reached the coast we turned south expecting to find the entrance to Sydney harbour. After a few hours steaming we discovered we were south of Sydney so had to reverse course to finally find the entrance.

There were also the cases of when we used to have to blow soot every four hours, the Engine room would ask permission to blow soot and frequently the ship would alter course to avert the soot being deposited on the ship only to have the Officer of the Watch forget to return to the base course on completion of the soot blow.

However back to the story, we arrived in Pearl Harbour to start our work up. I had heard a lot of stories about how these work ups weren't valued as we ran a different system to the Americans. However as soon as we arrived Fleet Training Group (FTG) came aboard. The first thing they did was asked for a copy of all our operating orders. One of the problems they had of course is the different terminology and we were very aware of this in the Engineering Department.

So the first days were taken up with meetings on-board and the briefings from FTG and it was interesting to have discussions with our American counterparts on the differing terminology and methods. I must admit by the end of the work up I could only praise the effort they went to learning our terminology and our operating methods.

We had a couple of days at their fire school. This was interesting as we used a lot of their gear but found the actual procedures were not dissimilar, so we got stuck in to learn as much as we could and really got quite a lot out of it.

The sea phase mostly involved the Executive Branch, Captain, OOW's and Operations Room. We had a couple of whole ship scenarios, which were FTG seeing the way we carried out our engineering procedures and then got to the final Battle Problem. The Captain decided that to avoid anyone not being up to the task the ship would tie up at Ford Island the night before so everyone had a good sleep. The intention was right until the Fwd. Chiefs Mess had a visit from one of our very good American friends so we stayed up a lot later than we should have and when Wakey Wakey went at some 0430 there were some of us that had felt better in days gone by.

So off we went with FTG to complete the final phase of the work up. This went really well and one of the reasons was just the general crew attitude of "we can do any of this with our eyes closed. The enthusiasm really struck a chord with the Americans and it was constantly mentioned at each section of the wash up. An example was they told

one of the boiler front stokers was told to lie down he was dead. The Stoker Petty Officer unaware of this indicated he wanted a change of sprayers as we were manoeuvring. The supposedly dead stoker immediately jumped up and carried out the sprayer change. When the FTG Petty Officer queried why he had done it his reply was that he was a lot more scared of the Stoker PO than FTG. So that sort of set the scene.

After the wash up we took the FTG engineering personnel up to the mess for a bit of a celebration and a thank you for all their efforts. They then regaled us with the story that the day before they had been conducting a work up on one of their own ships when before they even got into the main part of the battle problem there had been a flare up between different ethnic groups, a PO had given an order and one of the Juniors had pulled a knife, so the ship was taken straight back alongside and all hell broke loose with arrests and of course the Captain bearing the brunt of the issues and being told to sort his crew out.

So it was easy to see why FTG had focused on the our crew attitude and I guess in hindsight one of the reasons we passed out of there with a very high pass mark.

Most of the shore time we had in Pearl Harbour we seemed to congregate at the CPO's Club. This was sited at the golf course as the original CPO's Mess had burnt down. This place had a great atmosphere and we thoroughly enjoyed our time there, we were made to feel very welcome and needless to say I suspect the bar takings were somewhat better for our stay. The only downside was the Mess Manager took a dim view of the Kiwis conducting races around the mess on the office chairs which had wheels.

After another few days alongside in Pearl Harbour after the work up we departed with a fleet. This had RN, RAN, RCN and USN ships and we conducted exercises from Pearl Harbour to Esquimalt in Canada. This again was a reasonably long passage, as you never seem to travel in a straight line. One of the experiences was watching the big American aircraft carriers conduct their flying exercises. It was amazing to watch how quick the aircraft were dispatched and also watching them land on, the airframes certainly got a work out landing on with the coming from flying speed to stopped by the arrestor wires in a very short distance.

The other interesting thing was we were often put into the Plane Guard position, this is some distance astern of the aircraft carrier when they were conducting flying operations, the object being to recover the pilots if forced to ditch and they hadn't been able to recover them by helicopter. The helicopter was stationed just aft of the ship and out on the beam whilst we would be some half a mile astern. We would be at about 200RPM, nearly 30 knots trying to keep up with these ships, man they could really tramp.

We finally arrived in Esquimalt at the end of the exercise. There was an RPC put on in the CPO's Mess ashore for the fleet. We all went as a group and all was well until the CPO's from the CONQUEROR turned up. They had obviously done a bit of celebrating the fact that their nuclear submarine had managed to surface. They proceeded to take over the place. They had great delight in picking on their compatriots, telling the Skimmers that they had been in their sights for the whole exercise and could have taken them out at any time. The Chief Tiff was parading up and down the tables with a

tablecloth around his neck like a cape really giving to all and sundry. Once they got him down we got into discussion with these submariners, they were a hard case lot and we got on well with them.

The Chief's Mess were raffling a very large bottle of Canadian Club so we took a bunch of tickets. Then someone decided we should go into Victoria. The decision made we gave the submariners our tickets with the advice that as they had invited us over the next day if we won it then we would collect it next day. So off we went into town and had an enjoyable night.

The next day off we go to visit our mates on the CONQUEROR. I remember when we were walking around the side of the conning tower to get to the fwd hatch and down to their mess that this could be tricky reversing the trip to go back to our ship. So after a few beers we asked if we could visit the propulsion plant. Unfortunately the answer was no but they said that apart from the reactor the machinery was pretty similar to what we had so we had to leave it at that.

The next day they had a return to our mess. It was really interesting as they discovered we had rum and couldn't wait to help us drink it. Also the mess had scuttles, they couldn't leave them alone, kept opening them and yelling at people on the jetty. At 1600 they started making ready to go as they had to be back on-board as the reactor would be going critical in ready to sail early next morning. I did have concerns that there would be a mushroom cloud over us however when we got up next morning they had already departed.

We visited Vancouver and Seattle. The highlight of Vancouver for us engineering types was undoubtedly the steam clock and in Seattle it was a visit to the Boeing factory. After these two port visits it was down to San Diego and being stunned at the size of the Naval Base. After a visit there which included an organised trip to Disneyland which was a real playground for us young kids, really was an eye opener.

*To be continued.*



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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