

HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INC

LONGCAST

11 June 21 - Navy Club Lunch – Remuera Club
18 June 21 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Howick RSA
9 July 21 - Navy Club Lunch – Remuera Club
16 July 21 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at New Lynn RSA
24 July 21 – Ngapona Assn formal Dinner at Birkenhead RSA

Hi folks

NGAPONA ASSN FORMAL DINNER – 24 JULY 2021

An invitation to attend the function is extended to all NGA Association members, this includes Associate Members, and all past and present members of HMNZS Ngapona and their partners/spouses.

The Ngapona Association is holding a formal dinner on Saturday 24 July 2021 at the Birkenhead RSA, Recreation Drive, Birkenhead, Auckland. The guest speaker will be RNZN's Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral David Proctor.

Tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. The cost of this function is \$50.00 per head. A cash bar will operate. There will be a buffet type meal of three courses. A highlight of the evening will be a performance by Able Musician Rebecca Nelson. It is also expected that a rum issue will be held.

As this is a formal occasion, appropriate dress with miniatures is expected.

For planning purposes, please advise Expressions of Interest by **replying to this email** giving the names of attendees and a contact phone number.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NGAPONA ASSN

The Ngapona Assn is now looking for new members. Full membership is open to serving and ex members of HMNZS Ngapona. Associate membership is open to all others who have an interest in nautical affairs (subject to approval by the Executive Committee.) Join us for the comradery enjoyed by our members.

Membership form attached. Joining fee is only \$40.00 and no annual subscription.

Membership for serving members of Ngapona is free.

BATTLE FOR CRETE

This is the second of three parts of the experience of John Stuart Blackie ex Lt. RNVR in the Battle for Crete.

John Blackie is the father of Cdr Charles Blackie, past CO of HMNZS *Ngapona*.

"While in the water and quite defenseless, the survivors were subjected to quite unforgivable machine gun attacks. This so enraged Able Seaman Ian (Dusty) Rhodes, an Australian, that he swam back to the after part of Kashmir, which had not yet sunk and manned one of the Oerlikon guns and engaged the bombers who transferred their fire from those in the water to him. His great bravery was rewarded by his shooting down one of the bombers that had been straffing us in the water. The oily salt water cheer that went up as the plane hit the sea not far from the wreck, must have given many enough hope to survive the remainder of the ordeal yet to come. When the water rose so high up his body as to make firing impossible, Rhodes calmly swam away back to his shipmates. We later learned that although he had been recommended for the Victoria Cross, he was in fact awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

Now, apparently all alone, except for the upturned hull of Kelly, with the island of Crete a distant shadow, life looked grim. We all knew that the fleet had withdrawn to Alexandria and no-one would be so foolish to return to the aerial slaughterhouse. Hardly believable, but we spotted a mast near the horizon to the west. We had forgotten HMS Kipling, who was way behind the others, having been delayed during the night with steering gear problems. She had seen the sinkings from the distant horizon and was steaming back to the scene. When close to the hull of Kelly, attempting to rescue men clinging to the hull and in the water, she clipped the wreck and tore a gash in her side. This mishap had devastating repercussions from then on. Some compartments were flooded, weakening the bulkheads, which limited her speed to twenty knots and restricting her to course alterations in one direction only. In addition, she trailed an oil slick, visible from the air.

We of Kashmir watched in horror as Kipling quickly got under way to dodge yet another wave of dive bombers and to clear the swimmers. "That's it lads, she won't come back." The ships boats were still in the water, secured alongside and a most unfortunate seamanship accident occurred which caused the deaths of the First Lieutenants of both Kelly and Kipling, two very experienced and valuable destroyer Officers. However, with great courage, she did come back for us and steamed into the middle of Kashmir's crew, who were clinging to lifebelts or floating debris, there being no boats. Kipling had her scrambling nets over the side. We were encouraged to swim to her which meant letting go of the support that we had been relying on for the past three hours or so. This took immense courage, even to a ship only twenty metres away. My limbs were so weak, conventional swimming was near impossible. For more than twenty years after the war, I would wake shouting and groaning from an horrific nightmare as I dreamt of Kipling slowly pulling away without me. I did manage the twenty metres thanks to much encouragement from the matelots lining the deck with such torments as: "Swim Jack Swim, there's a bloody great shark just behind you, I can see the whites of his eyes and he's making a horrible sucking noise! Then to add to my near collapse, as I grasped the scrambling net after what had been already a struggle of desperation, I found I had no strength, hardly enough to close my hand, let alone lift a leg. The relief of arriving was so intense it left me with little will to make further effort. I do not know how I reached the

deck, only that a navy cup was thrust into my hands with the instruction, "Drink this lad, Nelson's proud of you!". I swear that the cup was half full and of course it was neat navy rum! As I was under age, I was not entitled to the daily tot, so had little knowledge of it's 'kindly' effect. I gulped it down as told, rather expecting it to be a cup of hot tea. I am convinced it was at least twenty minutes later that I took my next breath and wondered why my toes were burning!"

LIGHT HOUSE OF THE WEEK – EAST CAPE

Position: 37.41.5S 178.32.9E

Characteristics: Fl W 10s

Range: 19NM

Structure: White metal tower

The East Cape Lighthouse is located on the east coast of the North Island. Situated on the Eastland peninsular, it is the most easterly lighthouse in New Zealand.

The lighthouse at East Cape was originally located on East Island, just off the tip of East Cape. The East Island light was first lit in 1900. This location was very troublesome right from the start.

The government steamer capsized while bringing tower construction materials to East Island, and four men died.

East Island was also very unstable and the cliffs were constantly being eroded and slipping into the ocean. By the 1920s these slips were coming close to the lighthouse, and the decision was made to relocate the lighthouse to the mainland.

The light on East Island was extinguished in April 1922. The tower and all the buildings were relocated to the mainland. The East Cape Lighthouse began operation in December 1922.

The light was originally illuminated with a paraffin oil burning lamp, however, this was later replaced with an incandescent oil burning lamp.

In 1954 the light was converted from oil to diesel-generated electricity. In 1971 the lighthouse was connected to mains power.

The station was automated and the last keeper was withdrawn in 1985.

The original light was replaced in February 2002 with a modern rotation beacon, illuminated by a 50-watt tungsten halogen bulb. The original light can be viewed in the base of the tower.

The new light is powered by mains electricity and has a backup battery in case of a power failure.

The light is monitored remotely from Maritime New Zealand's Wellington office.

Visible in the base of the lighthouse are the old lenses that were removed when the new beacon was installed.

Life at East Island Lighthouse was practically hard for the keepers. The clay soil made it hard to grow vegetables or keep stock.

When the light station was relocated to the mainland life improved. Keepers could travel into town for supplies and their children could attend the local school. They were also able to grow vegetables and keep stock.

The lighthouse at East Cape was originally a three-keeper station but this was reduced to two keepers and then just one keeper, until the last keeper was withdrawn in 1985.

Today little remains to indicate that there was once housing and associated buildings for three keepers on this site.



Regards

Jerry Payne

Editor

HMNZS Ngapona Assn

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