

THE White ensign

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NAVY MUSEUM

Te Waka Taonga o Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

WELCOME to the third issue of our Navy Museum Journal The White Ensign. 2007 has been a busy and successful year for the Navy Museum. Our recent 25th anniversary celebration reminded us all of the important role the Navy Museum plays in telling the story of our sailors, their families and the communities from whence they came. We were reminded that every object and photograph in the Museum tells a story of adventure, courage and in some cases sacrifice. They tell the story of long absences from home, appalling conditions and mateship. Above all they tell the story of people; not just our heroes but the experiences of ordinary men and women, who day in and day out, do extraordinary things.

Telling New Zealand's naval story and honouring our heritage is both extremely important and a great privilege and in this respect the White Ensign has been an important means for the Museum to share the Navy story with a wider audience. Feedback we have received shows the White Ensign has a broad national and international readership and we thank everyone for all your very positive and constructive comments. It has been a real boost to receive such wide ranging and diverse public responses to our new publication.

The third issue of the White Ensign focuses on some of the changes in the Navy over the last fifty or so years, using some very personal naval stories. In this publication our articles cover a range of subjects where we explore many interesting and intriguing aspects of our naval history. We examine the contribution the Wrens made to the Navy from 1946-77 and we delve into our extensive oral history archive to explore the stories of two female members of the medical branch: Matron Christina McDonald and Petty Officer Kerry Cameron, where we compare their working lives from two very different eras. In this issue we also highlight the important role that Paratene Bennett has contributed to our Navy being the first Maori naval officer in the RNZN.

We have also retained our more regular features where we highlight specific collection items, in this case a cartoon of HMS Philomel, we look at some new acquisitions, highlight medals currently on display and we further examine local Devonport naval history.

The team at the Navy Museum wish you all the very best for the upcoming season and we hope that you will enjoy this issue of the White Ensign.

DC WRIGHT
Commander, RNZN
Director Navy Museum

Commander David Wright is the Director of the Navy Museum. David has been in the Navy for 23 years and has been the Director for the past two years.



ON THE COVER:
Sick Berth Attendant R D Turnbull with his sister Wren P A Turnbull, December 1963



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Sub-Lieutenant Paratene Jackson Bennett 1946

Personal Collection: Paratene Bennett

Against All Odds

Unthinkable today... but during World War Two there were officially no Maori officers in the Royal New Zealand Navy. Paratene Jackson Bennett's story of determination and courage, however, was soon to change all that. **BY ROSE EVANS**

In 1946 when Paratene Jackson Bennett was commissioned to officer rank the Navy gained its first Maori officer.¹ By comparison Paratene's brothers were officers in other branches of the New Zealand defence forces during Second World War (WWII). Perhaps the reason being was that at the outbreak of war our Navy was still a division of the Royal Navy and had not yet become a separate service as the Army and Air Force had previously become.

It is difficult to verify Paratene's status as the first Maori officer in our Navy as in wartime the only consistent qualifier for recruits was their religious affiliation and occupation. Ethnicity statistics have only been documented and available from early 2000 onwards. It appears from statistics now available from Defence that today Maori are in fact overrepresented in both the Navy and Army regular forces in comparison to the general population. Both Navy and Army

have a comparative Maori recruitment. The Navy has an approximate 22 % Maori recruitment while, the Army has a slightly higher rate of 25.8%. The Air Force on the other hand has a considerably lower recruitment for Maori at a 6.4%. However recruitment into officer rank for Maori appears to be considerably lower and this is evident in the 3.8% Navy and the rather diminished 1.38% Army officer recruitment figures obtained this year. ►



Personal Collection: Dick Evans

A studio photograph taken in Gosport, England of Fleet Air Arm (FAA) recruits. From Left to Right: Chess Waldron, Tony Gulliver, Paratene Bennett, Dick Evans, Joe Coterill, 1945

Out of Paratene's family of eighteen siblings, six were already enlisted in the Army and Air force. Better known was his brother Charles Moihē Te Awawaka Bennett DSO whose career in the Army as Lieutenant Colonel in Command of the Maori Battalion was a distinguished one.

Other siblings Captain Tiwha Bennett, Captain Manuhūia Bennett (later 3rd Bishop of Aotearoa), and Lieutenant Alby Bennett were all officers in the Maori Battalion. Flight Lieutenant Ted Bennett was a Spitfire pilot in the Air Force and Lieutenant Henry Bennett was a surgeon in the Medical Corps who was retained in New Zealand during WWII due to his specialist training in Psychiatry. With six brothers already contributing to the war effort Paratene felt compelled to join "Six of my brothers were overseas - now it was my turn".²

Paratene Jackson Bennett enlisted from Te Aute College for the Royal New Zealand Navy as a Naval Airman 2nd Class. He enlisted with nineteen others on 25 October 1944 and began his naval training in HMNZS Tamaki at Motuihe Island. He proceeded to England for flight training in HMS Daedalus in February 1945. While Paratene was training to be a pilot he underwent an interview with the Admiralty Board to be commissioned as officer. Paratene was told he was not of "British Stock"³ and therefore could not be an officer in the Navy.

It was a credit to Paratene's self belief that he contacted the New Zealand High Commissioner, W J Jordan, to question the Admiralty Board decision, "I wasn't at all pleased after I had undergone all that training for nine months. I thought, they are not going to get away with this".⁴

A few hours later Paratene was recalled to the Board who told him that they had received an urgent telegram from the High Commission insisting Paratene be made a naval officer leaving him to muse "Lord Nelson would have turned in his grave. I was absolutely delighted".⁵

The young naval officers were to embark on flying training but as it became obvious there would not be enough time to complete training before the war's end, they were offered transfer to other forces in Burma, Italy or to remain and serve in the Navy.

Bennett took leave and returned to New Zealand in 1946 for his father, Bishop Bennett's anniversary celebrations in Rotorua. Later in Wellington while attending a Ngati Poneke leaders' celebration Tom Parata of Ngati Poneke said that "he [Paratene Bennett] had brought distinction

"Six of my brothers were overseas - now it was my turn"



Fleet Air Arm training at Avondale Racecourse transit camp in 1944. From Left to Right: (back row) Paul Jones, Joe Lyons, Hoppy, Paratene Bennett. (front row) Dick Evans, Joe Stevens, Happy Weston

Personal Collection: Dick Evans



Personal Collection: Dick Evans

Midnight at the Fernleaf Club: Young Fleet Air Arm recruits fooling around at midnight in the Fernleaf Club, Knightsbridge 1945

upon the Maori people by creating a precedent which he hoped would be followed in the case of other young Maori who desired to make the Navy their career. Ngati Poneke was honoured by the presence of such a distinguished son of the famous father, both of whom had set examples to their Maori people".⁶

Bennett was strongly encouraged to continue his naval career by the then base senior officer, Commander Peter Phipps. Paratene decided however not to continue in the Navy. He felt a strong commitment to make a difference in his community, a value instilled in him by his father Frederick Bennett, the first bishop of Aotearoa. Frederick Bennett had always encouraged Paratene to do the best for Maori, "as

a family our parents and grandparents consistently encouraged us to do what we could for our race".⁷ It could only be surmised that the Navy at this very early stage of its development did not allow for the visionary leadership that a career in education and teaching would enable at this time. Frederick was determined to give all his children the best advantages. Most of his children graduated from tertiary institutions, all were active in public life and many received honours and awards.

Paratene enrolled at Teachers Training College in Wellington. He met his wife Dorothy Booleris here and they both embarked on their teaching careers in the two teacher rural school in the Ureweras. Paratene later was principal of the Otonga

School for 14 years and was later invited to join the Hamilton Education Board Inspectorate where he served for several years. However, Paratene always kept a strong link with the Navy. He was for several years, the Vice President to the Rotorua Returned Services Association and also served as President of the Te Arawa Returned Services' Association in Rotorua. Paratene is now retired with his wife Dorothy in Te Puke.

The Navy in 2007 is a significantly different entity to the newly created separate service in 1941. The reason behind its difficult birth has been suggested to have been influenced by pre-war political agitation for a separate service, Britain's withdrawal from the Singapore Strategy and by the recent disastrous campaigns on Crete and Greece. This separation has been suggested to have been primarily administrative where the order of Council merely substituted 'New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy' for the 'Royal New Zealand Navy' where nothing much was altered from an operations perspective. This concurs with Mathew Wright in 'Bluewater Kiwi's'⁸ where he states that New Zealand ships continued to operate with a proportion of Royal Navy personnel and be subject to use outside New Zealand.

Peter Phipps's (later the first New Zealand Vice Admiral) strong encouragement of Paratene Bennett to continue his naval career, perhaps illustrates Phipps's inspired vision for an independent New Zealand Navy. Paratene's commission was to represent a change that would sweep through the structural and political establishment, a change that is as relevant today as it was when our first Maori officer was enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Navy. ■

Rose Evans has recently been employed as a Project Manager - Exhibitions for the Navy Museum. She was previously employed at Te Papa as Conservator for Maori, Pacific, International History and Contemporary Sculpture collections.

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Sir Peter Phipps

BY MICHAEL WYND

Vice Admiral Sir Peter Phipps, KBE, DSC*, VRD retired from the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) on 30 June 1965. His qualities as an individual enabled him to rise from the rank of Ordinary Seaman in the Volunteer Reserve to New Zealand's first Chief of Defence Staff, on the rank of Vice Admiral. As a commander he was willing to fight for what was in the best interests of the Navy. He was the champion in unexpected areas, evident in his support of female personnel serving in the WRNZNS and the recruitment of Maori in the Navy.

While in command of the shore establishment in Auckland, HMNZS Philomel, he faced a mutiny over pay. His personality was such that he was able to handle the matter in a diplomatic way that both his superiors and the disaffected ratings maintained their respect for him.

In the 1950s the composition of the New Zealand Navy was being reviewed and rather than purchase two modern frigates the Prime Minister agreed to acquire HMS Royalist instead. Captain Phipps stated that the purchase of the ship was an unmitigated disaster which would affect New Zealand for the next ten to fifteen years. With supreme irony, Captain Phipps was then appointed to commission HMNZS Royalist in April 1956. He resisted pressure from the Royal Navy to firstly commission HMNZS Royalist, before it was up to an adequate standard and later refusing to accept the ship until all the modernisation work had been completed. By the due date, it was not and somewhat to the embarrassment of the New Zealand Naval Board, the date of commissioning was postponed by ten days.

After relinquishing command of Royalist, the newly promoted Commodore Phipps was appointed as the first New Zealand naval officer on the Naval Board. By 1967 the



VICE ADMIRAL SIR PETER PHIPPS KBE, DSC*, VRD, AS LIEUTENANT COMMANDER

New Zealand Naval Board was composed entirely of New Zealanders. Throughout his long career Sir Peter made several significant contributions to the Royal New Zealand Navy and to what has become the New Zealand Defence Force including being appointed at the first Chief of Defence Force, including being appointed as the first Chief of Defence Staff. ■

Michael Wynd has recently joined the Navy Museum as Researcher. He is currently completing his PhD in Military History.

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Eleanor Roosevelt inspecting the members of the WRNZNS during her visit to the Devonport Naval Base in 1942

Jenny Wrens

An insight into how women made their mark on the Royal New Zealand Navy.

BY GRANT HOWARD

Women today are an integral part of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), accounting for one in five of all personnel.

It was not always so. Sixty and more years ago, they were members of the Women's Royal New Zealand Naval Service (WRNZNS), one of three all-female forces established by the Government in 1942, with the principal aim of releasing more men for active service overseas. The Wrens, as they were known generally, were looked upon officially as a temporary force of 700 all

ranks, one to be disbanded when the Second World War ended. And so it seemed when, in December 1946, more than a year after the Japanese surrender, the last handful of Wrens received their discharge papers at HMNZS Philomel.

That they had served their country well was virtually without question. The only negative attitudes held by a minority of chauvinistic matelots. Believe it or not, there was actually one male medical officer who refused point blank to examine Wren patients. On the other side of the coin, there were men who

were sad to see the women go and who felt there should be a place for them in the post-war RNZN.

One of their champions was the executive officer of Philomel, Commander Peter Phipps, RNZN, who became later Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Phipps, the country's first Chief of Defence Staff. "From my point of view", he said, "the Wrens have been satisfactory, for each one has released a man for active service and at one stage here in Philomel every possible job that could be done by a woman was being done by a

Wren, with the result that the equivalent number of rating was made available for our ships for loan to the Royal Navy. I am very sorry the Wrens are going and it is said by some people that they should be kept on throughout the peace so that a nucleus of the organisation remains available for expansion in times of emergency”.

Whether he had the gift of foresight is a matter for conjecture, but in April 1947 it was Commander Phipps who was largely responsible for the Wrens being recalled to the colours. It was then that the lower deck, unhappy with both pay and conditions, mutinied. One major result of their action was that some 200 sailors elected to leave the service. Their choice created a critical manpower shortage, one the Navy had to solve as quickly as possible.

Commander Phipps sought and received permission to muster enough ex-Wrens to fill empty billets ashore. On Good Friday, it was he who ‘phoned Lorelle Corbin, a former third officer, to ask if she would be prepared to re-establish the WRNZNS. As a result of their conversation, Lorelle got a further call from the Chief of Naval Staff, Commodore George Faulkner, RN, inviting her to return. She reported on board at Philomel on the Wednesday following. The WRNZNS were back in business.

The road back was not easy. The new service was limited to 10 officers and 120 Wrens, roughly a fifth of the size of the wartime force. Recruiting proved difficult because Lorelle and Third Officer Mary Morten, who rejoined from Christchurch, were restricted to offering engagements of just six months. It took some straight talking to get that term extended, first to one and then two years. A more realistic three-year



WRNZNS Shooting Competition

All manner of precautions were taken to keep the sexes apart, not the least of them heavy blackout screens that Wrens had to rig at night to deter peeping tars.

engagement came with an Act of Parliament, passed in 1949, making the WRNZNS a permanent part of the RNZN.

But things were still not what they used to be. Wartime Wrens served throughout New Zealand in something like two dozen separate categories, the women who joined in peacetime were limited to: cooks, officers’ stewards, chart correctors, writers (shorthand and general), stores assistants, sick berth attendants, dental assistants, motor transport drivers, telegraphists, visual signallers, radar plotters and cinema operators. Postings were limited too, with Wrens serving in just Philomel and in HMNZS Wakefield (Navy Office, Wellington). There were no Wrens

in the South Island and none at the Waiouru W/T Station (HMNZS Irirangi). As in wartime, women could not serve at sea.

Accommodation initially was a major headache. A new home was not the only exciting development for the Wrens in that year. The Armed Forces were called in to work ports throughout the country in the wake of a watersiders’ strike that ran for about 21 weeks. In Auckland, the Wrens played a small but very important part, staffing the dockside cafeterias, where they served snacks, washed dishes and generally smoothed the paths of the servicemen who loaded and unloaded the ships. While the job these women did was very popular, it was outshone by that of the Wrens who drove jeeps taking a daily ration of beer to the men.

The first postwar recruits were billeted in a house at 93 Calliope Road, a building destined to become the residence of the Commodore, Auckland. As numbers grew, the Wrens were moved into Philomel and adjacent to the male ratings. All manner of precautions were taken to keep the sexes apart, not the least of them heavy blackout screens that Wrens had to rig at night to deter peeping tars. It was not until 1951



Above: Members of the WRNZNS on the Commodore Barge on an Auckland harbour crossing. The escort boat in the background was a wartime requirement for the barge

that the Government bought the Ventnor Hotel, in King Edward Parade, as a hostel for Wrens. A second hostel, Margaret House, in Calliope Road, was acquired later, followed by a house known as “the annexe” at No. 142 in the same street.

Recruiting was a problem throughout the 1950s, and the service was regularly “below strength”. In the early 60s the number fell to around 50, all ranks, and there were rumours that if the total dropped below 40, the service would be abolished. But relief was at hand. Children from the postwar “baby boom” saw recruiting figures increase both for the WRNZNS and the RNZN. In the same decade HMNZS Tamaki, the initial training establishment, moved from Motuihe Island to Fort Cautley, Narrow Neck, and the previously all-male stone frigate received its first posting of Wrens.

There were overseas postings too, something not achieved during the Second World War. One officer was appointed to a naval intelligence desk in Melbourne, and two Wren communication ratings to the ANZUK headquarters at Singapore.

The 1970s brought rapid change, the

biggest one the paying off of the WRNZNS. The end was forecast in 1976, when the Minister of Defence, Mr Allan McCready, announced government plans to absorb each of the three women’s services into the larger male force. For the WRNZNS the change meant more job opportunities and the possibility of going to sea in non-combat ships. The service was disbanded officially on 29 July 1977.

The WRNZNS chose to go out in style. Unlike the Army and Air Force, whose female forces apparently “faded away”, the Wrens had a formal parade where they were inspected by the Chief of Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral John McKenzie. Also present was the longest-serving Wren officer, First Officer Lorelle Corbin, MBE, who had retired in 1963.

The Wrens may have gone but their spirit lives on in the women of the RNZN. ■



Above: WRNZNS cooks in the galley

Grant Howard is a respected author of naval history. Books published: The Navy in New Zealand (1981), Happy in the Service (1985), Portrait of the Royal New Zealand Navy (1991), Gunner Billy, the story of Lt Cdr W.E. Sanders VC RNR (August 2007).



WRNZNS marching down Queen Street at a Naval Parade in 1945

Homecomings

The ships have changed, the fashions have changed, but when a Navy ship returns to her home port it is always a special occasion. These photographs chosen from the Museum Archives by Paul Restall capture some of the emotion experienced when returning from a spell overseas.

1. Ron Pemberton (Boys1st class) gets a warm embrace after returning from the battle of the River Plate in HMNZS Achilles February, 1940.

2. Back from the Far East HMNZS Rotoiti March, 1961. A sailor holds his new baby for what may be the first time

3. A sailor with his kit bag slung over his shoulder and his wife by his side loaded up with rabbits, (gifts from abroad) heads home from HMNZS Royalist after returning from the Far East in June 1959

4. Decked out for the occasion in hat and gloves, mum and daughter greet their sailor who returned from the Far East in HMNZS Taranaki in April 1963

5. Enjoying a kiss from his wife upon returning home in HMNZS Taranaki, September 1964, is Leading Seaman D. G. Boyes.

6. Twenty first century homecoming. Able Writer Miria Paul gets a welcome home kiss from her friend Isaac Visser after a Far East tour in HMNZS Te Kaha in 2006





Matron Christina McDonald (Left) with Petty Officer Noeleen Gunn departing for the Queens Coronation, 1953.

What a difference 50 years make

Entering a war-torn country in a medical capacity proved a very different experience for two Royal New Zealand Navy women. Here, their contrasting stories show how much has changed in the role of women in the medical branch of the Navy.

BY KELLY ANA MOREY

There have, unsurprisingly, been tremendous changes in the last five decades in the role of women and the medical branch of the Royal New Zealand Navy. Principal Matron Christina McDonald and Petty Officer MA Kerry Cameron were both involved in the medical branch of the RNZN in a nursing capacity

and both went on overseas missions to countries in post-war crisis. In McDonald's case, in 1946 she left the naval hospital on Calliope Road, Devonport where she was Sister in Charge and reverted back to the army in order to travel to Japan to manage a hospital as part of the occupying J Force. Nearly 50 years later Cameron, newly returned from a deployment in Iraq as a weapons inspector was selected to go to Macedonia with a New Zealand Services medical team in 1998 to support Kosovo refugees during the period of the conflict between Serbia and the ethnic Albanian section of Kosovo. A deployment which found her working in a tent hospital of a refugee camp near Skopje.

It is almost impossible to truly quantify the differences between the two women's

experience from their oral histories due to McDonald speaking very little of the conditions she worked under in Japan. However what can be concluded from the comparison of the two transcripts is that their departures for their respective deployments couldn't have been any different. Though McDonald was most definitely breaking new ground for women in the RNZN post Second World War, there is no mention by her in her oral history transcript of even a newspaper reporter clamouring for her story. In contrast, Cameron travelled with both print and television media, none of which was at her own behest, who clearly fixated on her as the only woman in the deploying group and made her the face of the story. It is probably safe to conclude that it would never have happened in Matron McDonald's day!

Another major difference between the two women's overseas deployments was undoubtedly the length of time each spent away from New Zealand: a staggering two and a half years for McDonald and five weeks for Cameron.

Upon McDonald's arrival in mid-1946 in Kiwa, Southern Honshu, south of Hiroshima, she, with various other medical personnel, took over a hospital that had been built as a sanatorium, a big hospital, "It would have been about 600 beds or more, and it was built of timber. Because the war had advanced so quickly, I don't think it had been in use very long, and it was beginning to deteriorate. The boards weren't painted and all that sort of thing. And it took a bit of work to renovate it, to get it functioning again." McDonald appears to have stayed at the renovated sanatorium for the entirety of her time away in an unknown capacity.

Without a detailed testimony from McDonald in regard to her working conditions, as it is difficult to compare them to what Cameron faced 50 years later which she, in contrast relates in some detail in her oral history. Without a doubt the conditions in Kosovo were extremely severe. The hospital in the refugee camp consisted of approximately a dozen tents with which to treat a steady stream of refugees with a myriad of physical and mental health problems. "I got employed basically as the Outpatients Department nurse" Cameron says. "There were so many things that we changed when we were there in really positive ways. Basic things like universal precautions which is the standard thing and medicine itself was not being observed like basic hand washing facilities. They had taken containers for needles but the trainee doctors that they had working for them were just chucking them in the rubbish bags. I became very unpopular when I used to tell doctors off."

Perhaps the biggest challenge in Cameron's opinion, faced by the medical team, was the lack of basic modern equipment "like a defibrillator, ... a pulsometer, an anaesthetic machine, oxygen regulators, and things like that. It was just ridiculous the facilities that they had and it was really frightening to be in that situation ... in this day and age you don't need to be without those things and especially when the money was there." It was as Cameron says, a return to 'bush medicine'.

As well as shortages of medical equipment and supplies, there was also the ongoing problem of petty theft in the camp with supplies of food and coffee being constantly pilfered which as Cameron observes was

hardly surprising given the quality of life for the people in the area.

The range of medical problems that the camp hospital faced included as you would expect in a war-torn country, gun shot wounds but also, "all kinds of chronic problems from just exposure to the elements and just from stress". In her three weeks in the hospital Cameron saw people with a range of illnesses from: "chronic diabetes, chronic epilepsy, people who were on regular

had they been left a couple of hours longer would have died."

Though there were definitely differences in what the two women faced, there were also similarities, primarily in what both women had to say about what they found in these two war-decimated countries and more importantly how they felt about the level of human despair they saw on a day to day basis, which indicates if nothing else that some things, like war and the damage

Though there were definitely differences in what the two women faced, there were also similarities...which indicates if nothing else that some things, like war and the damage it inflicts on ordinary human lives really doesn't change.



Chief Petty Officer Medical Assistant Kerry Cameron (now Lieutenant Climo)

medication who hadn't had medication for say 10 or 15 days. A lot of stress and a lot of older people who were just totally exhausted. We did a lot of suture jobs. We had a lot of ingrown toenails ...we had a lot of deliveries, caesareans and a lot of normal deliveries as well. We saw a lot of paediatrics where they had children who were dehydrated and some of them quite critically ill because everything shuts down a lot quicker with children ... we managed to save two or three children who

it inflicts on ordinary human lives really does not change. Nor do people truly grow accustomed to witnessing hardship and misery if the empathy that is clearly evident in both women's oral histories is any indication. As Cameron says: "I think that the whole experience itself, I will never forget it as long as I live." ■

Kelly Ana Morey is an established author and is one of the team who work on the Oral History Project.



Aerial view of 'Takapuna Head'

A Stark Reality

The second in a series of articles linking the Royal New Zealand Navy to the local history of Devonport. The past is prologue to what is now. BY RUSS GLACKIN

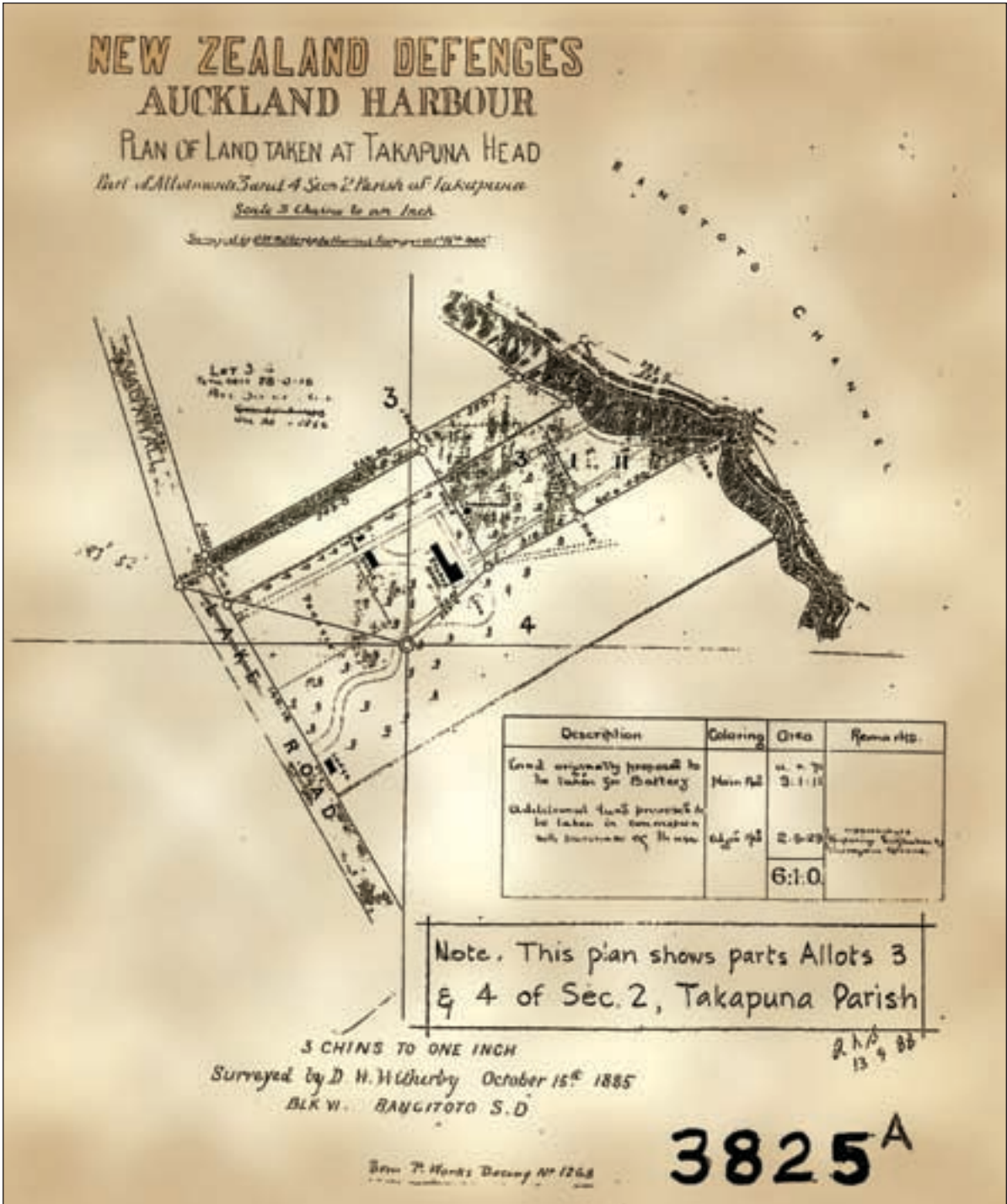
Takapuna Head, the coastline between Cheltenham and Narrow Neck beaches, today encompasses HMNZS Philomel, the training base for the Navy's junior officers and a pristine, manicured rugby field, the remnants of the old Fort Cautley. But the tale of the public acquisition of Takapuna Head is the story of a major scandal that resulted in a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the truth of the purchase.

Robert Mozeley Stark, who later gave his name to Mozeley Avenue in Devonport, had purchased his 32 acre property which included Takapuna Head, in 1881 and he lived in a two-storey home at Stark's Point. Stark was a man of some substance it seemed. He was a Director of the Devonport Steam Ferry Company and in partnership with one E.W. Allison had developed the

Melrose estate in Devonport. He was also a foundation member of the Takapuna Jockey Club in Lake Road, the site of the present-day Waitemata Golf Course, and he was the Club's President in 1882. Towards the end of 1885 rumour spread that Stark had sold his home and some land for defence purposes to the government for £16-17,000. Devonport was stunned as three months earlier Stark had offered his house and ten prime acres for sale for £3,000 without success. Concurrent rumours of secret land purchases by Ministers of the Crown no doubt contributed to considerable public speculation about a possible 900% increase in the value of Stark's property. So much heat was generated that the sale was discussed in Parliament but without success as Ministers managed to evade the issue. Sustained pressure throughout early 1886 finally forced

the government to admit to its purchase of 28 acres and 16 perches from Stark for £17,100. Auckland was so enraged that the Stark Commission was set up under Colonel Haultain to investigate the transaction but not before Stark completed the sale, received the money and on 30 March, 1886 sailed for San Francisco on the mail ship Almeda never to return to New Zealand.

The results of the Stark Commission's inquiry revealed an amazing story. Stark had holidayed at the Waiwera Hot Springs Hotel where Auckland's social elite then spent their summer sojourn and during the course of his stay he had met the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Vogel. In the course of conversation, Vogel had told Stark that the government was planning to take his property to build a fort to defend Auckland. At the same time it so happened that the Government Valuer was



Land Information New Zealand Report showing an aerial view of 'Stark Point'

Stark completed the sale, received the money and on 30 March, 1886 sailed for San Francisco on the mail ship Almeda never to return to New Zealand.

making a valuation of the Devonport district. Stark contrived to meet him on the job and casually mentioned that he had received an offer of £17,000 for his property through a leading Auckland firm of land agents and could produce the offer in writing. The trusting valuer took him at his word and raised the valuation of the property from

£2,000 to £17,000 so that when Vogel and his government came to buy Stark's property on which to build Fort Takapuna they had to pay their own inflated value for it! The public uproar died down when the facts of the purchase were made public but severe measures were taken by the government, presumably including the sacking of the

valuer, to ensure that similar land purchases and valuation scandals were never able to occur again. ■

Russ Glackin is a part-time guide at the Navy Museum. As a retired History teacher he is able to indulge in his passion for history.

The Man and his Medals

This is the story of Captain Wybrants Olphert DSO and Bar, DSC, RD. BY CLIFF HEYWOOD



WYBRANTS OLPHERT WAS born in Derby, England, 15 September 1879. In 1893 at the age of fourteen, he joined the Merchant Navy Training Ship Worcester and two years later the New Zealand Shipping Company. He served as an apprentice officer and was appointed to the sailing ship Rakaia as 5th Officer, plying between Portsmouth and Lyttleton.

In 1902 Olphert commissioned in the Royal Navy (RNVR). In 1914 he was “called up by proclamation” and placed in command of HM Armed Yacht Scadaun. On 21 June the following year he engaged a German submarine 30 miles south of Fastnet Rock, an action mentioned in despatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC).

Later Olphert volunteered for service in Q Ships and was subsequently placed in command of HM Yacht Pioneer II. His command of the Q-Ship HMS Salvia was, in his own words, one of the pinnacles of an extraordinary career.

HMS Salvia appeared as a helpless, innocent, little ship, unescorted and alone. She waited hour by hour, week by week, for the moment of contact. The ship was at the mercy of any curious submarine that came to take a look. On 23 March 1917 the ship met with a submarine and a battle ensued. For this action Olphert was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

In all, HMS Salvia was very successful and sank three submarines before her final battle on 20 June 1917, when she was struck by a torpedo launched from a submarine at 7am. Commander Olphert was captured and spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war, returning to London in 1918. Upon his return to London he was awarded a bar to his DSO.

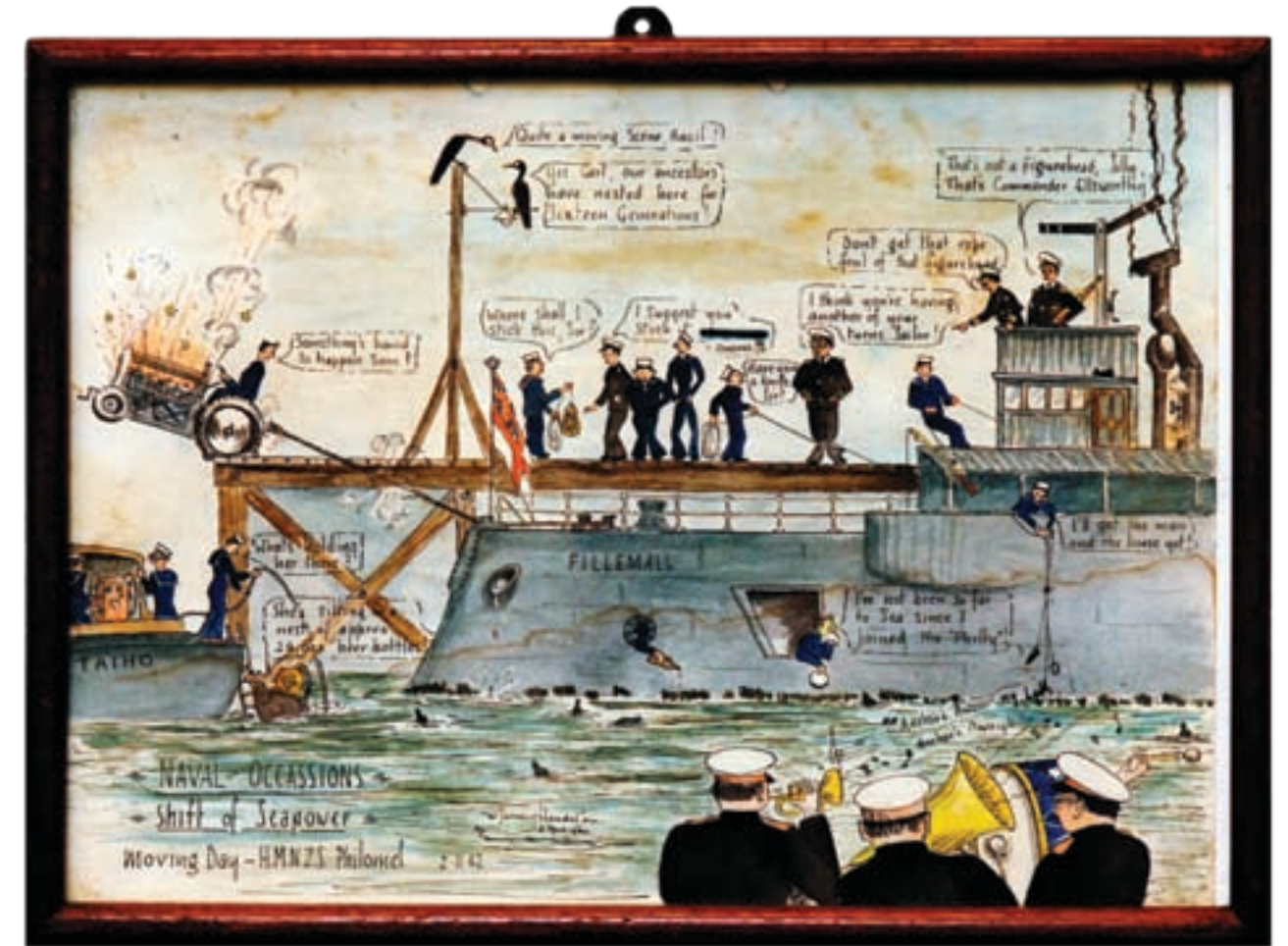
Wybrants Olphert retired from active service with the rank of Lieutenant Commander with a DSO and bar, a DSC and two mentions in despatches. He became known as the man responsible for the sinking

of five submarines.

Upon arrival in New Zealand, Wybrants Olphert, his wife and family settled in Lower Hutt. He became Assistant Superintendent, and later Marine Superintendent, of The New Zealand Shipping Company Limited.

In 1928 he was promoted to Commander and appointed to command the newly formed Wellington Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He was promoted to Captain and continued in command of the Wellington Division. In 1939 Olphert died from cancer. In 1951 the Wellington Division was named HMNZS Olphert in his honour. ■

Cliff Heywood is the Deputy Director of the Navy Museum. Cliff was formerly Collections Manager and has been at the Museum for 16 years. In preparing this article Cliff has used much of an article written originally by Wybrant’s grandson, Tim Olphert.



Drawing on the past

Murray Henderson’s humorous and poignant cartoon marks the sad demise of HMNZS Philomel, one of the most significant ships in New Zealand’s naval history.

BY CLAIRE FREEMAN

Sixty years ago saw the end of an era for the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) - the final farewell to HMNZS Philomel, New Zealand’s first warship. The long serving (and long-suffering) Philomel had played its part for New Zealand for 32 years, from the development of the New Zealand Division, through two world wars, and into the early years of the RNZN.

HMNZS Philomel is the subject of a satirical watercolour and ink drawing by Murray Henderson, held in the Museum collection. The cartoon-style illustration is titled ‘Naval Occassions [sic] - Shift of

Seapower’ and shows HMNZS Philomel being moved into dry dock. It is dated 2 November 1942. In order to make some sense of the cartoon and its humour, it is necessary to know a bit about the background of HMNZS Philomel.

Built at His Majesty’s (HM) Naval Dockyard, Devonport, England in 1890, HMS Philomel had already seen many years of honourable service for the Royal Navy when, in 1913, she was transferred to the New Zealand Division. She was to serve as a sea-going training ship but the First World War (WWI) intervened and instead she

MURRAY HENDERSON’S CARTOON NAVAL OCCASSIONS [sic] - SHIFT IN SEAPOWER, 2 NOVEMBER 1942.

saw service as a support, coastal defence and escort ship throughout the Pacific, Mediterranean and Red Sea. In 1921, HMS Philomel made her last trip under her own steam - to Devonport dockyard, Auckland, where she began 25 years as a training and depot ship. The buildings and facilities that began to be built ashore alongside the ship were also part of the naval training depot and, ▶



HMNZS PHILOMEL CIRCA 1944. NOTE THE NUMBER OF HUTS WHICH HAD BEEN ADDED ON HER UPPER DECK FOR USE AS CLASSROOMS AND ACCOMMODATION.

from that time on, the name Philomel was synonymous with the Devonport Naval Base.

With the Second World War (WWII) beginning in 1939, the need for a new training establishment to replace the cramped facilities onboard Philomel was apparent. In 1941, Motuihe Island was commissioned as the training base Tamaki. Philomel continued in service however, being used as officers' accommodation from 1941-42 and as a patrol launch base from 1942-45.

By this time, Philomel's (now HMNZS Philomel) appearance had changed and she was starting to show her age. Large windows had been cut in her sides to give better light and ventilation. She had her engines removed and replaced with concrete slabs for stability. To accommodate recruits and staff, a number of wood and iron huts had been built on her upper deck. Later, her funnels and all but one mast were removed. "The once-proud cruiser was little more than a shell..."¹.

In the bottom left corner of the cartoon can be seen a sailor on a launch asking a diver "What's holding her there?" The diver's response is "She's sitting on a nest of approx. 29,003 beer bottles!". This is in reference to a quip regularly made about Philomel; that she was held afloat by thousands of bottles

An officer at the base looked over the side of the jetty where HMNZS Philomel had been. "It leaves quite an empty space," he said. And that seemed to sum it up.

which had been thrown overboard at officers' parties. It was said that when she was moved into dry-dock, "the irreverent would always maliciously declare that she moved off to a grinding noise of breaking bottles."²

There is also reference to the ship's Commanding Officer, Acting Commander J.C. Elworthy in the cartoon: "Don't get that rope foul of that figurehead." "That's not a figurehead, silly, that's Commander Ellsworth [sic]".

It is clear, however, that the cartoon was intended to make light of HMNZS Philomel's decrepit state. As one newspaper stated³, "Time was when the Philomel was a very useful unit of His Majesty's Navy. ... 'Fighting Philly' she was called in those days, but it would be little less than mockery to call her by that name now." According to the donor of the drawing, G. Gair, at the time the ship went into dock (for routine maintenance) there was

even speculation that it was to be made ready for sea to defend New Zealand from Japanese invasion!

The truth behind the merriment was, of course, that HMNZS Philomel was indeed worn out. In 1946 she was sold to Strongman Shipping Co., Coromandel. She was stripped of her timber and fittings and in 1949, towed out to sea and sunk. By then Philomel had served the New Zealand Navy for more than 30 years and 60 years had passed since her hull was first laid down.

It is appropriate that today's Naval base bears the name of Philomel as, without a doubt, the ship is one of the most significant in RNZN history. The demise of HMNZS Philomel was a truly momentous occasion and the gap she left behind was felt by all who had served on her:

At dawn this morning a hulk passed by North Head... At the Naval Base a familiar



ABOVE: SAILORS LEARNING TO SLING THEIR HAMMOCKS ON HMS PHILOMEL, CIRCA 1938
BELOW: HMS PHILOMEL BERTHING AT THE FERRY WHARF IN WELLINGTON 1917

berth was curiously empty ... The Philomel, as Navy men and Aucklanders knew her, and will remember her, has gone – for good... An officer at the base looked over the side of the jetty. "It leaves quite an empty space,"⁴ he said. And that seemed to sum it up. ■

Claire Freeman is the Collection Manager at the Navy Museum. Claire has previously been employed at the Auckland Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England.

REFERENCES:

1. 'Philomel is history, but name lives on', Paul Titchener, in undated, unsourced newspaper clipping from Museum ephemera file. (EXP 0002)
2. Unnamed typescript from Museum ephemera file (EXP 0002)
3. 'Fighting Philly', unsourced newspaper, circa 1944 from Museum ephemera file. (EXP 0002)
4. 'Philomel's long career in Auckland ends', Auckland Star, 17 January 1947



Outfitting the Navy

Camille Rosenfeldt, daughter of Karl Rosenfeldt, who owned Commodore Outfitters Limited, is our featured donor for this edition of the White Ensign. BY KATHERINE BOL

In recent months Camille has generously donated many items such as gilt buttons, tailor's chalk and spools of gold thread from her father's career as a Naval Outfitter. At that time the Navy provided uniforms for its servicemen and women but made-to-measure ceremonial and evening uniforms could be specially ordered from a Naval Outfitter. Karl Rosenfeldt began working at a Naval Outfitters in the Ferry buildings on Quay Street, Auckland, in 1936. He was initially responsible for measuring and fitting the uniforms but later made the decision to purchase the business in the early years of Second World War (WWII). One of the most interesting items donated, a hand-painted shop display card, is from this period. The card in question reads: "Our humble contribution commemorating the part our Navy played in the last war, and in particular the Battle of the River Plate in which the German Pocket Battleship Graf Spee was

defeated by the help of the HMS Achilles of the Royal New Zealand Navy in December 1939." (Note that prior to 1 October 1941 HMS Achilles was part of New Zealand Naval Forces.)

HMS Achilles played a key role in the victory at the Battle of River Plate, the first major sea battle of WWII. She received a hero's welcome when she returned to Auckland on 23 February 1940 and celebrations extended from street parties to displays in shop windows.

In the early 1950s Karl Rosenfeldt moved his shop to Karangahape Road, Auckland and renamed it Commodore Outfitters Limited. He retired in 1962.

The museum is most grateful for this generous donation. ■

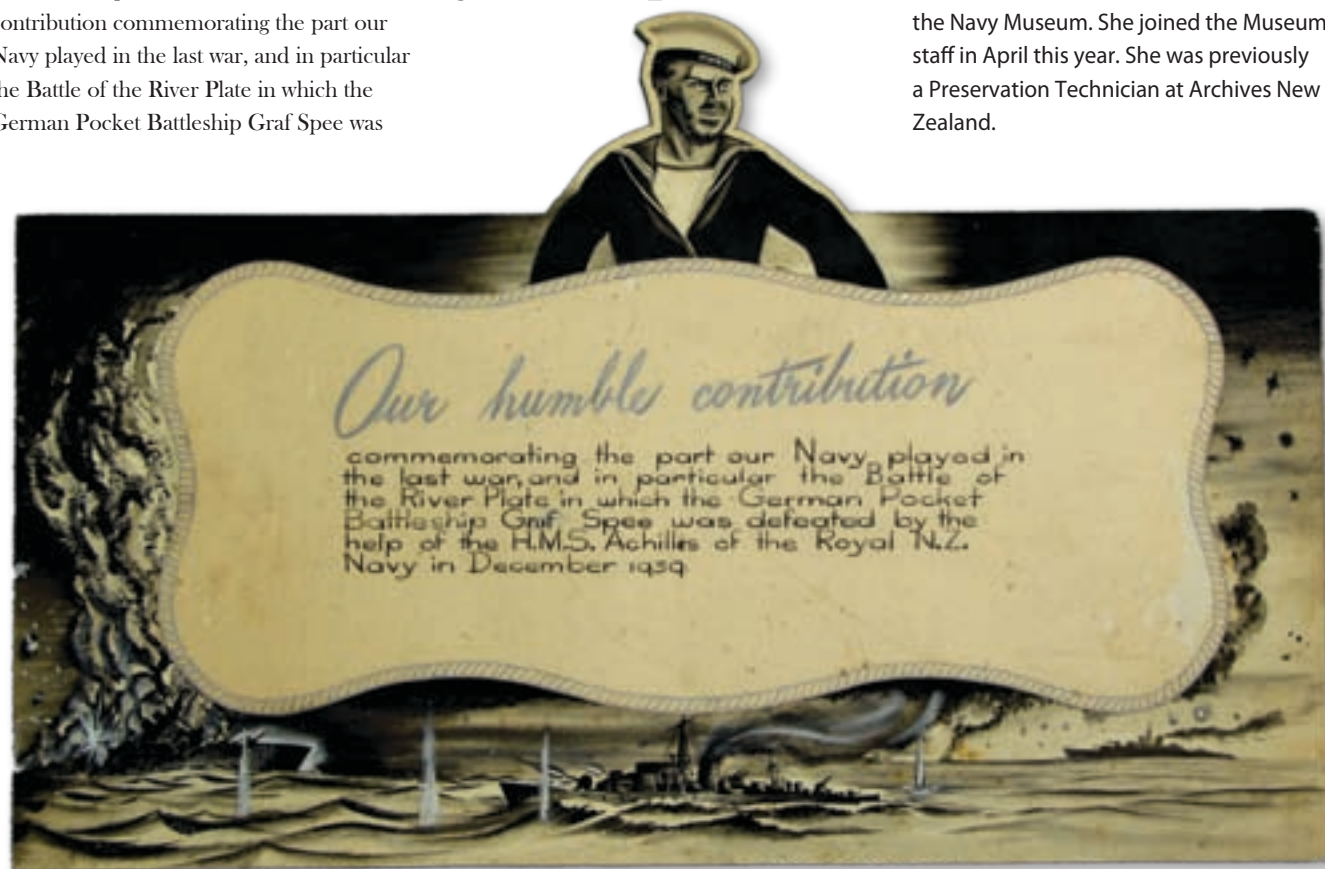


Above: Karl Rosenfeldt



Above: Gilt buttons

Katherine Bol is the Collections Assistant at the Navy Museum. She joined the Museum staff in April this year. She was previously a Preservation Technician at Archives New Zealand.



A display card commemorating HMS Achilles key role in the victory at the Battle of the River Plate from 'Commodore Outfitters'

I bet you didn't know...

What is in a name and where did the name come from? This was a question I was asked. How did Calliope Point and Stanley Point in Devonport get their names?

BY DEBBIE MCKINNEY



Calliope Dock opening day with HMS Calliope and HMS Diamond in the dock

A majority of people will say that Calliope Point was named after the famous HMS Calliope (Calypso-corvette), which survived a hurricane in Samoa and the same Calliope, which was in the Calliope Dock (inside Naval Base) when it opened in 1888. However, this is not the case. In fact 43 years earlier in 1845/6 HMS Calliope, a 28 gun sixth-rate ship visited New Zealand and Calliope Point was named after her. It has been said that she was anchored off the point on one of her many visits to the Auckland area.

As HMS Calliope was under the Command of Captain Edward Stanley, most people will think he named Calliope Point after his ship and gave the adjacent point his name. In fact Second Point, as it was named in the late 1800's, was renamed to Stanley Point in 1900 in honour of Captain Edward Stanley of HMS Calliope.

Debbie works in the Front of House at the Navy Museum and previously served in the RNZN

ICE BREAKER

The Navy's Involvement in Antarctica

The Navy Museum will be launching an exhibition on the Devonport wharf to celebrate Scott Base's 50th anniversary this year and commemorate the Royal New Zealand's Navy's integral part in this. This exhibition will be launched in late November 2007 and will run for 2 months until early January 2008.

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READ ALL ABOUT IT!

25th Birthday Celebrations

In October, a cocktail party was held at the museum celebrating 25 years since the official opening of the Navy Museum in 1982 by Rear Admiral K.M. Saull RNZN (Rtd). Friends and supporters of the Museum had a great time.



Honorary Captain Mr B.P.N. Corban, Trustee, Navy Museum giving welcoming address.

WATERFRONT HERITAGE TRAIL

- Explore Devonport's relationship with the Navy in a fascinating Waterfront Heritage Trail.
- Call (09) 445 5186 for more information.

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE NAVY MUSEUM



The Museum has future plans to recognise different ways to support the Navy Museum including current friends, ex-Navy associations, volunteer projects and many more.

If you are interested in the work of the Navy Museum, you may wish to join our mailing list and receive updates via "The White Ensign". Please contact us by phone (09) 445 5186 or write to Navy Museum, Private Bag 32901, Devonport, Auckland.



NAVY MUSEUM

Te Waka Taonga o Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa

www.navymuseum.mil.nz