

# THE White ensign

ISSUE 04 AUTUMN 2008

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY MUSEUM JOURNAL



# NAVY MUSEUM

Te Waka Taonga o Te Taua Moana o Aotearoa

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WHITE ENSIGN EDITORIAL ADVISORS:  
CDR David Wright  
Mr Cliff Heywood  
LT CDR Barbara Cassin

MANAGING EDITOR:  
Rose Evans  
Tel: (09) 445 5386  
Email: rosemary.evans@nzdf.mil.nz

EDITORIAL TEAM:  
Claire Huddart  
Tel: 027 324 6745  
Email: Clairehuddart@yahoo.com  
Christine Hodgson  
Tel: (09) 446 1821  
Email: christine.hodgson@nzdf.mil.nz

DESIGN:  
Nikki Payne  
Tel: (09) 446 1820  
Email: nicola.payne@nzdf.mil.nz

PRINTER:  
APN Print NZ Ltd.  
Tel: (09) 472 3659

MAILING LIST AND FRIENDS:  
To join or leave our mailing list, please contact:  
Christine Hodgson  
Navy Museum, Private Bag 32 901, Auckland  
Tel: (09) 445 5186  
Email: christine.hodgson@nzdf.mil.nz

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**2008** is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of 'The Great White Fleet' to New Zealand waters. The sight of sixteen capital ships of the United States Navy in Auckland harbour must have been overwhelmingly impressive, reflected in the fact that upwards of 10 percent of New Zealand's population at the time viewed the Fleet. In this issue we look at this event from a New Zealand perspective and consider how the visit perhaps represented the beginnings of closer military ties with the United States of America.

In this issue we also commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New Zealand's participation in the greatest operation of World War One where motor launches were involved - the raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend on St George's Day, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1918. The raid of Zeebrugge and Ostend is a story of great dash and daring resulting in many awards for gallantry including twelve awards to New Zealanders.

Along with our regular features we also explore some of our Navy's customs and traditions including the 'Make and Mend' and a look at the history of naval punishment.

Sadly, in this issue we also recognise the recent passing of Jack Harker and Grant Howard.

Jack Harker QSM was a former Petty Officer in the Royal New Zealand Navy and a noted naval author. Jack wrote a total of ten books telling the story of the navy including 'HMNZS Achilles' and 'Well Done Leander'. While Jack will be sadly missed his memory will live on through his books and his enduring passion for the navy.

Grant Howard was a regular and welcome visitor to the Navy Museum and had, particularly over the last couple of years, become a great friend to everyone in the Museum. Grant made a significant contribution to telling the story of the Royal New Zealand Navy as well as being a regular contributor to this journal.

Grant and Jack will be sadly missed by us all at the Museum and by everyone that knew him.

**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:  
Alex Cameron (left) and Charles Claxton, both from Christchurch, do the traditional Trafalgar Square photo shoot on their way to crewing the new HMNZS Otago in 1960.



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# The Visit of the Great White Fleet

## August 1908



Today it may be cruise ships that pull in the crowds, but in 1908, nearly 10 percent of the country's population came to witness an historic event in Waitemata Harbour. In this feature article, Russ Glackin, reveals the story behind this significant occasion and a public relations exercise that would even impress a Government of today!



On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1908 over 100,000 people crowded the vantage points around Waitemata Harbour in Auckland to witness the arrival of United States Navy's Atlantic Fleet (popularly known as the Great White Fleet) in New Zealand. The Fleet was on a 14-month, 46,000 mile circumnavigation of the globe. This huge gathering of people, comprising about 10 percent of the country's total population, was undoubtedly the largest ever assembled in New Zealand up to that time. Even the new main trunk railway was hastened to completion so that a Parliamentary delegation could make the journey from Wellington to Auckland in a single day to

welcome the Fleet.<sup>1</sup> The reaction of the New Zealand public was the result of a natural curiosity to see such an awe inspiring display of naval power in New Zealand waters. The Royal Navy had never sent a battleship, let alone a fleet, anywhere near New Zealand. The spectacular sight of sixteen massive battleships painted brilliant white and buff with gold bow fittings, armed with an array of big guns was unprecedented. After nine days of civic receptions and celebrations, marred only by many American sailors deciding to jump ship, the Fleet then departed for Sydney, Melbourne and Perth in Australia. This epic, globe-trotting voyage of the Great White Fleet had caught the imagination of New Zealand, a reaction that was repeated in each of the Fleet's 20 ports of call in the 14 countries it visited. A hundred years on, it is still a remarkable voyage that evokes a world sensation.

President Theodore Roosevelt's purpose in sending the Fleet on a world tour remains complex because he gave different reasons for his decision at different times - leaving historians struggling to identify his primary motivation.<sup>2</sup> His original intention was to deploy the entire Atlantic Fleet into the Pacific on a "practice cruise", to hone battle skills and investigate coaling and docking facilities on the way to Asia and more

particularly, the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> But it also became a demonstration to an expansionist Japan - made bold by its success in defeating the Russian Baltic Fleet at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905 - that the United States of America (USA) could comfortably shift its fleet to the Pacific with or without the Panama Canal if necessary. The aim was to assuage the fears of the virtually defenceless West Coast of the USA of the remote possibility of a Japanese military threat, serving to reinforce existing fears of Japanese immigration and economic competition. What began as an exercise in "Big Stick" diplomacy by Roosevelt, aimed primarily at Japan, actually eased the way for a rapprochement with the Japanese when he included them in the Fleet's itinerary. Roosevelt then further extended the Fleet's cruise in the Pacific into a global circumnavigation. He had been quietly building the second-largest Navy in the world and the global tour of the Great White Fleet was intended to announce its arrival. The voyage served as a global public relations event for the USA's naval power.<sup>4</sup>

The Fleet did not have a set route on its way around the globe but it required numerous port visits to replenish coal, water, food and other supplies due to the difficulties of re-supply at sea. The Australian Prime

Framed photographic triptych by Henri Winkelmann of the Great White Fleet anchored in Auckland Harbour 1908





Commemorative medallion for the visit of the United States Fleet to New Zealand 1908.



Minister, Alfred Deakin, was quick to react. He dealt directly with the USA to issue an invitation to visit which promptly incurred the wrath of both the British Foreign and Colonial Offices and embarrassed the Admiralty. But it was accepted with alacrity by Roosevelt. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, when made aware of Deakin's action, immediately invited the Fleet to visit New Zealand. Australia's difficulties paved the way for his invitation's success in London although a direct invitation was also lodged with the American Consul-General in New Zealand.<sup>5</sup>

Ward's motives for the invitation were premised on fears and concerns similar to Deakin's. His decision to invite the American Fleet to New Zealand revealed that, contrary to the views of his successor as Minister of Defence, Sir James Allen and several historians since, Ward did have a coherent

naval policy. It reflected his deep concerns about New Zealand's security and Britain's apparent strategic neglect of its South Pacific possessions at a time when the naval strategic landscape was undergoing major change. Ward always believed that New Zealand's defence was ultimately dependent on the global power of the Royal Navy. This was made evident in the South Pacific by the presence of its Australasian Squadron based in Sydney. New Zealand had been making a financial contribution to the small and somewhat obsolescent Squadron since 1887 in return for the constant presence of several of its ships in New Zealand waters. The assumed command of the Pacific Ocean by the Royal Navy was now being challenged by German naval expansion in Europe which raised the question of whether Britain would have the ability to spare enough battleships

from European waters to strengthen the Australasian Squadron sufficient to meet a powerful enemy in the Pacific. This concern was further exacerbated by the 1903 Naval Agreement which allowed the Squadron to be withdrawn in times of threat to meet Imperial defence priorities. These concerns were crystallized by the Japanese defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905 which effectively removed Russia as a deterrent to adventure in the Pacific making Japan a major naval power in the region. Within a month of Tsushima, the Commander-in-Chief of the Australia Station, Rear Admiral Fanshawe, was warning Wellington that Japan was Australasia's real and only danger, a comment made more real when several of the Royal Navy's battleships on the China Station were withdrawn to Europe to ensure a safe margin of superiority over Germany in the North Sea.<sup>6</sup> Not even the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, forged in 1902 and renewed in 1905 seemed able to alleviate the growing fear of Japan in New Zealand; fear of further Japanese territorial expansion, of Japanese immigration and economic and trade competition. From this time on notes Ian McGibbon, 'the danger posed by Japan provided an important undercurrent to New Zealand's defence thinking.'<sup>7</sup> Feeling isolated and vulnerable in the face of potential Japanese expansionism, defended only by a small Royal Navy Squadron that Britain may not be able to reinforce in an emergency, New Zealand began to look at its options. A potential ally was sailing its Great White Fleet over the horizon. It was a strategic situation that was to be repeated 35 years later but with a startlingly different result.

The intention of Ward's invitation to the USA's Great White Fleet was never to supplant Britain's Royal Navy with USA as the protector of New Zealand in the Pacific but rather to explore the prospect of closer defence ties with a nation that shared similar heritage and traditions and, in particular, fears of Japanese expansion and immigration across the Pacific.<sup>8</sup> So despite the success of the Fleet's visit to New Zealand, Ward continued to place his faith in the ability of the Royal Navy to provide effective protection in the South Pacific, content that the USA was building its naval power and taking an active defence interest in the region. From that perspective he never sought to further strengthen political links to the USA after 1908, preferring instead to return to business as usual.

Soon after the departure of the Great White Fleet from New Zealand, Ward provided tangible evidence of his long-held belief that the most effective defence

of New Zealand lay in an Imperial context. He considered that New Zealand was too small to develop an independent navy in the manner of the Australians and feared that New Zealand would be subsumed into an Australasian fleet unit as suggested by Deakin at the expense of its own identity

and independence. Instead he continued to rely on the ability of a single Imperial Navy, able to extend its power to wherever it was needed in the British Empire, to defend New Zealand. When, in late 1908, the British Naval Programme doubled the number of battleships to be built in 1909

**“The spectacular sight of sixteen massive battleships painted brilliant white and buff with gold bow fittings, armed with an array of big guns was unprecedented”**



Commemorative medallion for the visit of the United States Fleet to New Zealand 1908.

in order to maintain their self-imposed margin of superiority over Germany, Ward, fearful that Britain was about to lose its naval supremacy, made an arbitrary decision in his characteristically impulsive manner. In a dramatic gesture to the British Government, without consultation with his Cabinet nor the permission of Parliament, he offered to defray the cost of the immediate building and arming of one first-class battleship of the latest type. The result was HMS New Zealand, an 18,000 ton, Indefatigable-class battle cruiser, armed with eight 12-inch guns in four turrets, capable of 27 knots, with a Ships company of 789 men, built at a cost of 1.7 million pounds. She went on to fight with great distinction in all the major North Sea battles of the First World War.

The fears and concerns of 1908 that had resulted in the invitation to the Great White Fleet were to return in stark reality in late 1941. In the years following First World War and into the 1930s, New Zealand opted for a Singapore Strategy based on continued reliance on the Royal Navy in the Pacific. Augmented by contributions to the construction of a powerful naval base in Singapore, the objective was to provide a safe harbour for the Royal Navy upon its arrival in times of emergency. The strategy was put to the test when the Royal Navy's reinforcements to the Far East, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were sunk by Japanese air power in December 1941, followed soon after by the fall of Singapore following Japan's declaration of war on the USA after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.<sup>9</sup> Suddenly and dramatically the Royal Navy was no longer able to provide effective protection for New Zealand and Australia. New Zealand's sole security against Japanese aggression became the USA's Pacific Fleet.

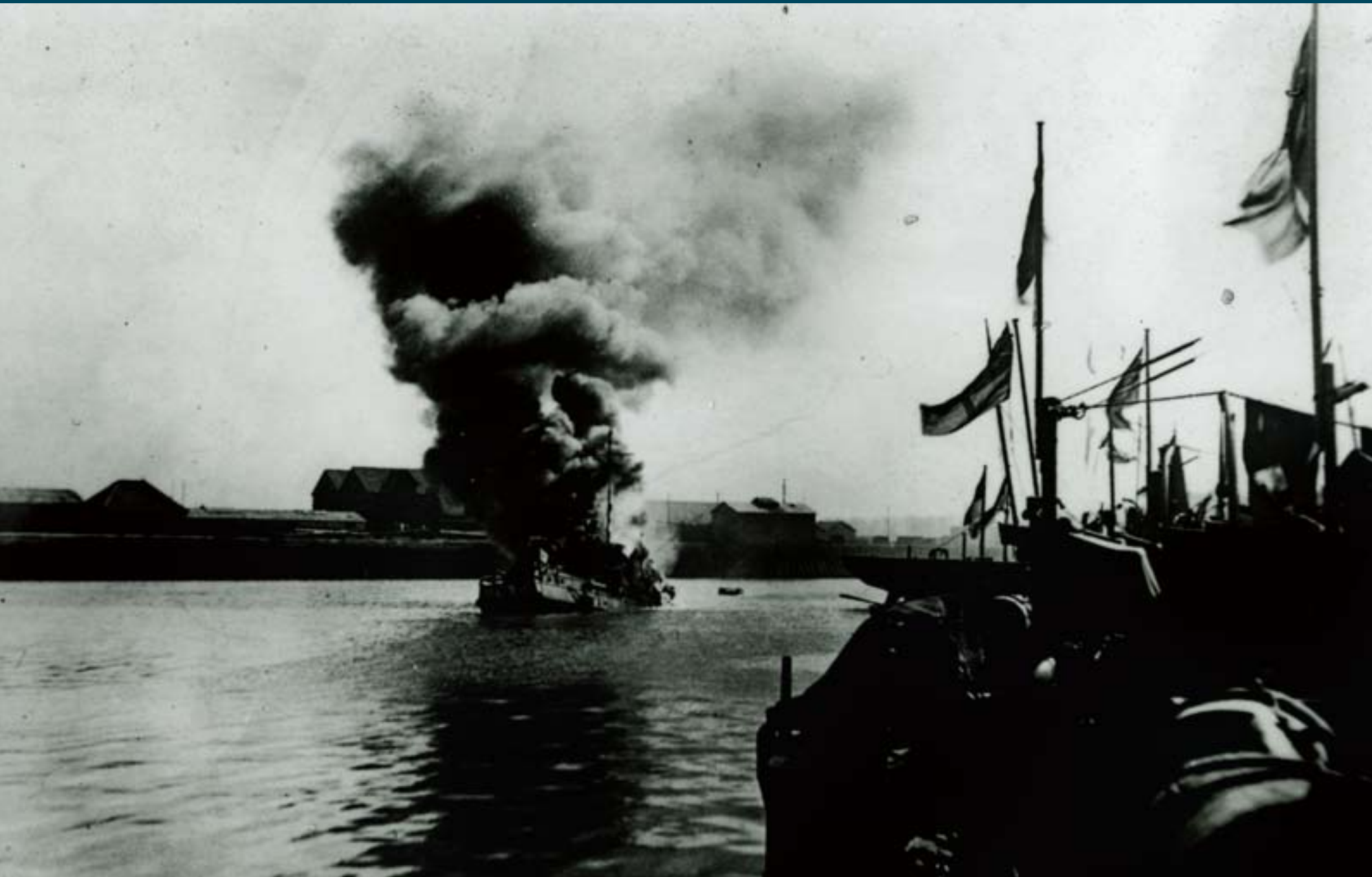
Thus the potential ally that had sailed its Great White Fleet over the horizon in 1908, thankfully took up temporary residence in New Zealand and Australia in 1942, a residency that became permanent with the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. ■

Russ Glackin is a part-time Guide in the Navy Museum and recently retired as the HOD History and Social Studies at Westlake Boys High School.

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Motor launch, Dunkirk, 1918

# St Georges Day 1918 and the Battle of Zeebrugge

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Zeebrugge on St George's Day, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918. Around 200 New Zealanders were recruited two years previous to this for service in the Royal Naval Motor Boat Reserve who provided personnel for service in Motor Launches in this memorable campaign.

Dunkirk cemetery is a permanent reminder of New Zealand's participation in the greatest operation where motor launches were involved - the raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend during April 1918. One young New Zealander buried in Dunkirk is Motor Mechanic J F H Batey who served in one of these coastal motor boats CMB 33 and was killed in action during the aborted raids on Zeebrugge on 12 April 1918.

The aim of the Zeebrugge operation named Operation Z.O. was to neutralise the key Belgian ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend as both ports were used by the German Navy as a base for submarines and light shipping.

The concept of Operation Z.O. was for the main force of the attack to be at Zeebrugge

with a smaller offensive at Ostend. The plan was for block ships (old cruisers filled with cement) to sink themselves in the Bruges canal and Ostend harbour and thereby halt the use of both harbours by the Germans. Three block ships plus two submarines were to block Zeebrugge and two block ships were to be used at Ostend. An additional attack on Zeebrugge was to be made by an old cruiser, HMS Vindictive, which was to go alongside the mile long Zeebrugge mole, land a detachment of marines and seamen, who would then destroy its formidable shore batteries defending the harbour and then blow up as many installations as possible before withdrawal. The whole operation would be covered by aircraft of the newly created Royal Air Force and supported by numerous small craft including Motor Launches (ML's) and Coastal Motor Boats (CMB's).

The raid on Zeebrugge and Ostend was launched early in the morning of 23 April 1918 - St George's Day. In the attacking force were a number of New Zealanders, including 14 officers and 15 motor mechanics from the Motor Boat Patrol, of which four officers and eight motor mechanics received awards for gallantry. Among those decorated were Lieutenant M.S. Kirkwood who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Chief Motor Mechanic E.F. Chivers who received the Distinguished Service Medal. The medals of both of these men have been

on display at the Navy Museum

The operation began badly however. The smokescreen intended to cover Vindictive as she landed her troops on the Zeebrugge Mole proved ineffective in the face of unexpected winds. One of the parties to storm the mole included men from HMS New Zealand under the command of Lieutenant Commander A.L. Harrison with Lieutenant Commander B.F. Adams second in command. While undergoing their training for the raid the men from HMS New Zealand formed a haka party under Able Seaman Harold Eves. Attired in spun yarn and dark stain they made a distinct impression on the men from the other ships.

Lieutenant Commander Harrison was wounded at an early stage and Lieutenant Commander Adams took command for most of the action. Able Seaman William Lodwick was in charge of a Lewis gun and Harold Eves was one of the advance bombing party. Lodwick had his Lewis gun blown out of his hands before leaving the ship, but recovered it and went ashore, the Lewis gun being hit by German bullets five or six times while he was on the mole. Around the time that the recall was sounded for the storming party Lieutenant Commander Harrison regained consciousness and taking all the men he could find stormed the mole again. All these men were killed or wounded. Harrison himself was killed and his body picked up

Edgar Frank Chivers



“For three solid weeks we had the thing hanging over our heads and all of us had reached the stage where we didn't care what became of us.”





RNVR motor mechanics HMS Hermione 1917

## “As for sacrifice, well ... we never thought of that”

by Able Seaman Eves who tried to carry him back on board before he was severely wounded and later taken prisoner. Both Able Seaman William Lodwick and Harold Eves, men from HMS New Zealand, were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for their parts in the action.

The lack of success on the mole was significant as the shore batteries remained untaken. In turn sustained fire from the shore batteries disabled a further three ancient British Cruisers – Thetis, Iphigenia and Intrepid – packed with concrete, preventing them from halting and scuttling themselves in their correct positions at the narrow entrance to the canal. If the success of the raid on Zeebrugge was initially unclear the smaller attack on Ostend was less than successful.

Malcolm Kirkwood, aged 28, was an Auckland and one of two brothers who joined the Motor Boat Patrol Reserve in 1916. During the raid on Ostend he was First Lieutenant of ML 532 (under the command of Captain Hamilton Benn, the Senior Officer of the ML Force). The primary task of this vessel, one of three, was to rescue the crews of the block ships after they had sunk themselves in the harbour. During the approach the block ships, the old light

cruisers Sirius and Brilliant, were illuminated by search lights and became the subject of intense fire from the shore batteries. ML 532 increased speed and went ahead of the two ships, making smoke and then returning to station on the quarter of Brilliant. The two block ships were close to the shore and with visibility reduced by smoke keeping station on them was particularly difficult and as a result Captain Benn lost sight of Brilliant. In an attempt to follow Brilliant through the smoke ML 532 came bow-on to the port side of the cruiser which had run aground and swung broadside on. This completely smashed the bows of the ML, shifting both engines on their beds and breaking the exhaust pipes, filling the engine room with dangerous fumes. Keeping the vessel afloat was a major achievement, but only at the cost of the gassing of the engine room personnel. After rescuing the crew of Brilliant; ML 276 towed ML 532 clear and Lieutenant Kirkwood was able to get one engine restarted before he lost consciousness and was hauled free. Getting the engine restarted enabled the vessel to return to England, instead of being either sunk or captured by the enemy. His elder brother Ronald also took part in the operation against Zeebrugge.

Malcolm Kirkwood was later to state that:

“For three solid weeks we had the thing hanging over our heads and all of us had reached the stage where we didn’t care what became of us. It would be almost impossible to describe the feelings of any of us, but we did ache for the time to be up and doing. As for sacrifice, well ... we never thought of that.”

While these attacks on 23 April were of great dash and daring and resulted in many awards for gallantry, including a total of eight Victoria crosses awarded for the night action, the 500 casualties (including approximately 200 fatalities) was high, and while represented at the time as a significant British victory, the Zeebrugge raid did not in reality hinder German operations from either port for more than a few days. ■

This article was written using material first published in 1997 by Lt Cdr P.Y. Dennerly RNZN, a past Navy Museum Director and noted Naval Historian.

**FOOTNOTE:**  
*Motorboat vessels were known by numbers rather than names, were 25 metres in length, displaced 34 tons had a speed of 19 knots and were armed with one 3 pounder gun and two depth charges. The launches operated in areas such as the English Channel, the coast of Ireland and the Mediterranean*

# Chief Motor Mechanic Roy Alexander

DSM RNVR



Original DSM ribbon colour is navy and silver

BY MICHAEL WYND

**NEW ZEALANDER CHIEF** Motor Mechanic Roy Leslie Alexander DSM RNVR won the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) while serving with Royal Navy’s Patrol Service in the First World War in one of the largest raids carried out by the Royal Navy. His medals are now held by the Papakura RSA.

Alexander was born in Ramarama in February 1898 and grew up there. He was working for the well-known plumbing merchants A & T Burt<sup>1</sup> and living in East Tamaki with his parents when he left New Zealand to join the Royal Navy Patrol Service in November 1916. He was promoted to Chief Motor Mechanic in November 1917.<sup>2</sup>

In 1918 Alexander was serving with the Royal Navy’s Motor Patrol Service at Dunkirk.<sup>3</sup> This flotilla was assigned the responsibility for rescue work, to make smoke screens or lay smoke floats for the raids launched at Zeebrugge and Ostend.<sup>4</sup> The DSM medal was awarded to Roy Alexander for services during the operation against Zeebrugge on the night of 22-23 April 1918.<sup>5</sup>

Vice Admiral Roger Key’s report on the raid praised the small fleet of craft that supported the warships during the operation noting the skill and coolness of the men who manned these craft while under heavy fire.

Sadly, Alexander was wounded during the raid and died of his wounds in South End Hospital on 21 August 1918.<sup>6</sup> His award was announced in the London Gazette



Roy Alexander sympathy card. Cover (not shown) reads: “RNVR, for King and Country”

dated 19 July 1919 along with a number of other ratings awarded the DSM for their service on the small craft attached to the raid.<sup>7</sup> He is buried in Southend-on-Sea (Sutton Rd) Cemetery in the Commonwealth War Graves section.<sup>8</sup>

In a reply card to the many people who sent their sympathy for the family’s loss, Alexander’s parents included the passage:

**He played the game, ran the race and finished the work allotted to him.**

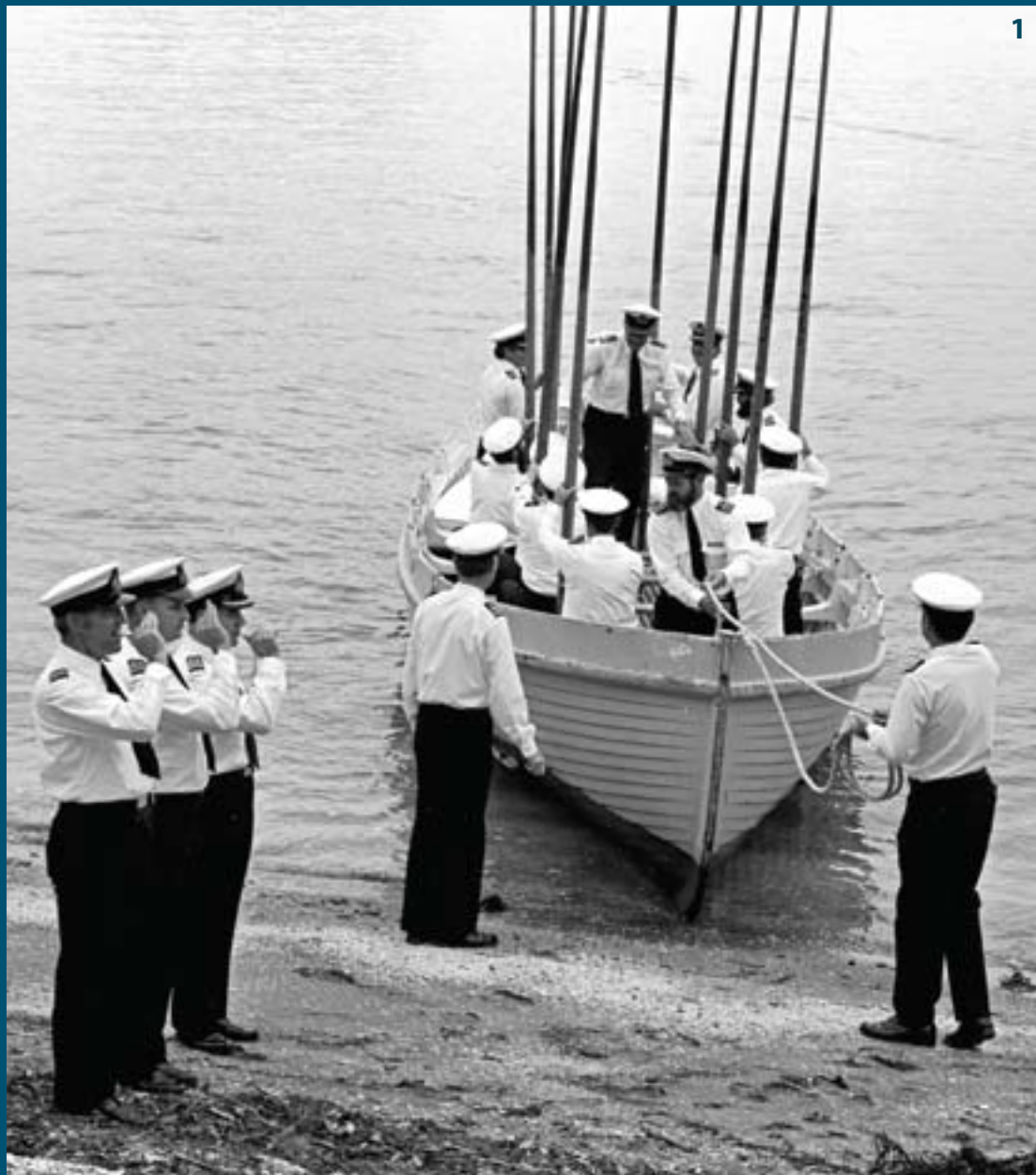
A fitting memorial for one New Zealand’s naval heroes. ■

Michael Wynd is the researcher at the Navy Museum. He is currently completing his PhD in Military History.

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# Rowing the Captain ashore

ROWING THE CAPTAIN ashore is a naval tradition that celebrates the end of command on a ship, or shore establishment. It was a courtesy accorded to the Commanding Officer when leaving the ship for the last time. They would be rowed ashore in one of the ship's boats manned by their officers. This tradition dates back to the age of sail when the Captain was posted ashore. The Commanding Officer was rowed ashore when their service aboard a particular vessel ended. In shore establishments the tradition still took place but in many different forms. These variations of rowing the Captain ashore are apparent in the following photographs compiled from the museum archive by Paul Restall. ■

1. Commodore K.M. Saull is rowed ashore, April 1980, in the traditional way in a naval cutter, the oars raised in the 'ship oars' position and the ships officers piping him ashore.
2. Captain L.S. Stanners, of HMNZS Philomel being rowed ashore, on top of a Vauxhall Velox towed by his ships officers with drag lines in February 1960.
3. Captain L.G. Carr DSC

- departing HMNZS Philomel, December 1962.
4. At the end of Commander I.A.D. Hunter's time in command of HMNZS Waikato, he is rowed ashore in the ships Mini Moke, December 1979.
5. A regal farewell is given to Commander J.E.N. Welch, Captain of HMNZS Canterbury as he is landed ashore by crane in a very elaborate chair, April 1984.



# Every Sailor needs a Housewife!

Every new Naval recruit is issued with a 'housewife'. This is not what you may be thinking... rather it is a term for the sewing kit that contained all the items needed for the task of 'make and mend'. Katherine Bol explores this fascinating Navy tradition.

The expression make and mend derives from the early years of the Royal Navy (RN) when sailors (known in the navy as ratings) would be given time to make and mend their clothing and kit. Although uniforms of sailors were not standardised by regulation until 1857, the gold-laced apparel of the admirals, captains, lieutenants and midshipmen had already been established in 1748.

During this early period of RN history, ships carried slops (supplies of ready made garments or the materials to make them with) for sale to the men which ensured a certain degree of uniformity. However, the stocks of uniforms carried on board ships were limited and many sailors preferred to make their uniform last as long as possible as they were reluctant to squander their pay on clothing. To give the ships' company an opportunity to make and mend their uniforms, commanding officers began to set aside one afternoon a week, usually a Thursday, for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> A quote from an unknown early 20<sup>th</sup> century RN sailor describes a typical make and mend day:

"One remembers those Thursday make-and-mend afternoons in the tropics with the ship steaming over a glassy sea under a cloudless sky and the upper deck crowded with sailors – some frankly asleep, some reading, many patching their garments or darning socks...sewing machines were

always whirring somewhere."<sup>2</sup>

Throughout RNZN history new recruits have been issued with their own sewing kit, known as a 'housewife'. The term derives from 'hussif', a case for needles and thread.<sup>3</sup> It contained all the items needed for the traditional task of make and mend. Instructors of ratings used to tell their charges, "If the Navy had wanted you to have a wife they would have issued you with one!" The implication was that ratings were now accountable for the maintenance of their kit, and tasks such as ironing or sewing on buttons, previously the task of their mother or wife was now their responsibility.

It is not known when housewives were first formally issued in the RN, but a poster, dated 1898, shows a housewife alongside other items necessary for the maintenance of one's uniform such as brushes, blackening for boots, soap, a soap bag and a scrubbing brush.<sup>4</sup>

Most housewives in the Naval museum's collection date from the 1930s and 1940s. They vary widely in colour, size and content. Housewives from this period are usually made from a rectangle of thick navy blue cotton cloth, measuring (when laid flat) approximately 380mm by 150mm. Inside was up to three gabardine pockets and a felt insert for placing needles. Two tape ties attached to one end enabled the whole thing to be rolled up and tied shut for storage. Originally they contained needles, cotton thread, safety pins, a thimble, buttons, scissors, wool (for repairing woollen clothing and darning socks), a

name type stamp and red silk for embroidering ones name or initials into uniform items. Over time however, many of these sewing items appear to have been used up or lost, and some housewives that have been acquired for our collection also contain additional personal items of the donors.

Through the twentieth century both officers and ratings were issued with housewives. An officer was paid on a higher scale and so could afford to pay a professional tailor or naval outfitter in port to make or repair his uniform. A rating on the other hand received less money and so was more likely to do the sewing himself, or to pay another, more skilled sailor, to do it for him.<sup>5</sup> The issue of the closed gangway (limited shore leave) for lower deck also contributed to officers and ratings using their housewives differently. The fact was that the dirtier daily activities of personnel on the lower deck, such as coaling or cleaning the boiler, resulted in heavier damage to their uniforms and increased the demand for regular repairs.

The need for cheap uniforms on board ships caused small tailoring businesses known as 'jewing' firms to be set up by sailors wishing to supplement their income. Interestingly this was not an ethnic slur, but a term derived from the popularity of Jewish tailors ashore in the cities. Every ship had men skilled in the use of sewing machines available to make you a new uniform or repair your old one for a price and fast. Experienced tailors could complete two suits in an evening!<sup>6</sup> On a large cruiser such as HMS Achilles or Leander there might be two or three firms each employing up to three people. These firms were official businesses, run after gaining approval of the Captain through the commanding officer but only operating in the sailor's free time.<sup>7</sup>

Uniforms made by jewing firms were not only popular because they charged less than a professional tailor, but also because as they were made to measure, they fitted well and



ABOVE LEFT: Ships' company from the HMS Leander enjoying make and mend siestas circa 1938  
ABOVE RIGHT: Rating from HMNZS Waikato doing his domestics, 1967



could be slightly altered according to the fashions of the time. Chief Electrician R.B. Harvey tells of his experiences on board HMS Achilles:

"You could get collars made a little bit more tiddly than the ones that were issued, without being too narrow. You had to be careful or otherwise you would not be allowed to wear them. They could make them with the blue on the underneath as well as being on top, whereas the issue ones had a funny blue and white stripe under the covering, it didn't look nice when it blew up. Matelots are funny people, they like them tiddly."<sup>8</sup>

Though make and mend days may have

mend days, housewives and jewing firms have evolved to suit the New Zealand environment and modern standards of the RNZN. Today, ready-made clothing, shorter service time at sea and a professional seamstress on base has seen to the demise of the jewing firm. However housewives are still issued to new RNZN recruits, albeit in simplified form. Although make and mend still exists as a traditional form of recognition of significant events, or activities is no longer expected to be used for uniform making or mending. A 'stand down' is now granted as compensation for 'extended or arduous duty'.<sup>10</sup> ■

## 'If the Navy had wanted you to have a wife they would have issued you with one!'

originally been established for a practical purpose, they, along with activities such as sports and competitive games like tug of war, also became a crucial part in maintaining good morale aboard ships. This is illustrated by a signal from the museum collection in which the Commander in Chief of the RN, advises the end of World War I. It reads:

"The Armistice commenced at 1100 today and the customary method in HM [His Majesty's] service of celebrating occasion to be carried out by ships companies splicing the mainbrace at 1900 today Monday and are to be followed by make and mend duties".<sup>9</sup>

Like many RN traditions, make and

Katherine Bol is the Collections Assistant at the Navy Museum. She was previously a preservation technician at Archives New Zealand.

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Replica housewife containing safety pins, thimble, buttons, red silk, blue wool, needles and cotton.



# Kissing the Gunners' Daughter

Everyone knows the famous naval shanty, 'What shall we do with the Drunken Sailor'? Most assume that when, later in a verse, we 'give him a taste of the captain's daughter' the said sailor is in for a good time, when actually nothing could be further from the truth! Here, the thorny issue of the history of punishment in the Navy is explored by Sarita Burgess.

When Winston Churchill surmised public perception of navy custom he famously said "Don't talk to me about naval tradition. It's nothing but rum, sodomy and the lash". Many would have begged to differ as naval tradition is, of course, more than these things. But we also can't deny that naval history is riddled with information relating to all three. For example, who knew that while most of us thought that the drunken sailor was enjoying the captain's daughter, he was in fact receiving that age old naval tradition, 'the lash'?

Naval historians have made much of the punishments contrived and adhered to by the navy over the years. In his 'Crime and Punishment' in the Royal Navy, John D. Byrn Jr points out "that while the naval punishments developed in Elizabethan times may indeed seem harsh to twentieth

by the Royal Navy was death, given only at courts martial. Rank determined the style of execution, with officers being brought before a firing squad. Death for seamen meant hanging from a yard-arm.

Far more frequently inflicted were the punishments 'flogging 'round the fleet' and 'flogging at the gangway'. Flogging round the fleet was a lengthy process involving a squadron. The prisoner was placed in a barge, stripped above the waist and bound to a triangular grating constructed for the occasion. The prisoner would receive an allocated amount of blows on each ship then examined by a surgeon before being declared fit to receive another set of blows on the next vessel. All accompanied by a Piper and drummer playing the 'Rogue's March', it could take several hours to complete. Flogging 'round the fleet' was often used by courts

crime. More macabre makers added bolts and other such items to increase the intensity of the pain. While adult sailors were given lashes to the back, boys received theirs on the posterior, usually while 'kissing the gunners daughter' (bending over a gun barrel). It is said that some sailors had the holy cross tattooed across their back's to prevent being 'irreligiously flogged'<sup>5</sup>.

Cat o' nine-tails, currently on display at the Navy Museum



## "Don't talk to me about naval tradition. It's nothing but rum, sodomy and the lash"

century sensibilities, they were fitting for the times. More often than not, the deterrent value of physical retribution was so great that these punishments could almost be seen as humanitarian gestures<sup>1</sup>. As unbelievable as this may seem, Byrn also notes that "much of the Royal Navy population of the time was thought to be drawn from the prisons of Newgate and Bridewell<sup>2</sup>, necessitating the need to provide those who observed them with a grim lesson about the fatal consequences that could accompany serious violations of the Articles of War"<sup>3</sup>.

The most severe form of punishment given

martial as a substitute for execution<sup>4</sup>, although it could also result in death.

Flogging at the gangway was a shorter process. Unlike flogging 'round the fleet' it could be carried out solely at the order of the commander of the vessel. The prisoner was again stripped to the waist and whipped in public.

The cat o' nine tails (or more affectionately known as the captain's daughter since, in principle it was only used under his authority) was a nine thronged device made of rope. Each throng could be knotted as many, or few times as was deemed appropriate for the



Contemporary RNZN sailors performing the traditional pirate's punishment; walking the plank.

In the 1860's, the Royal Navy abandoned the use of the cat o' nine tails on boy seamen due to the poor reputation that the cat had gained through its frequent use in prisons. It was replaced by birches that were standardised by the Admiralty<sup>6</sup>.

'Running the gauntlet' was another punishment reserved for particularly bad crimes. Prior to the ceremony, the entire crew were organised into two columns facing each other around the perimeter of the main deck. The prisoner was escorted through the lane formed by the ships company to the tune of the 'Rogue's March'. Each man hit him with a short piece of rope punctuated by several knots (called a knittle). The prisoner was required to complete three laps of his horrific path<sup>7</sup>.

There were other punishments endorsed by the Admiralty for lesser crimes. These included 'starting' (beating with a rope to hasten a sailor's behaviour). 'Gagging' was used for the opposite effect, involving the insertion of a metal or wooden rod into the mouth. Other physical penalties included 'ducking'; placing an offender on a small baton with his feet weighed down by shot and quickly hoisting him up a yard-arm before dropping him into the sea. The 'spread eagle' involved tying a man by his hands and feet

to the standing rigging of the mizenmast and leaving him there at the captain's pleasure. A punishment of wearing the 'wooden collar' had the culprit in a cumbersome lumber yoke laden with cannon balls in any conspicuous part of the vessel, while 'carrying the capstan bar' required the prisoner to carry a heavy beam of wood and walk fore and aft upon the weather gunway, for the period of a watch (four hours)<sup>8</sup>.

The Navy Museum has a range of artefacts relating to discipline, including the 'punishment books' which detail punishments for boy seamen in Philomel in the 1930's. Punishments listed in the books included caning, meals at the defaulter's table, extra drill, stoppage of pocket money and turn out half an hour early. There was some degree of creativity however, when a Boy Seaman 'Did eat another boy's dinner at 1230' his punishment was to 'take charge of working parties in lieu of sports'<sup>9</sup>.

The use of such punishments that we would deem savage had waned by the late nineteenth century. As such, New Zealand military forces lack authorised histories of these types of punishments.

While corporal punishment still clearly held a place in naval discipline in the 1930's, developments in issues of human

rights in most places have seen use of the 'cat' banned. An exception is Trinidad and Tobago, where use of the cat is still legal under the Corporal Punishment (Offenders over Sixteen) Act of 1953<sup>10</sup>. ■

Sarita Burgess is the Museum Educator and has been with us since May 2007. She was formerly a history teacher at Northcote College. As a teacher, she has a vested interest in the topics of punishment and discipline, and thoroughly enjoyed researching and writing her article for this issue!

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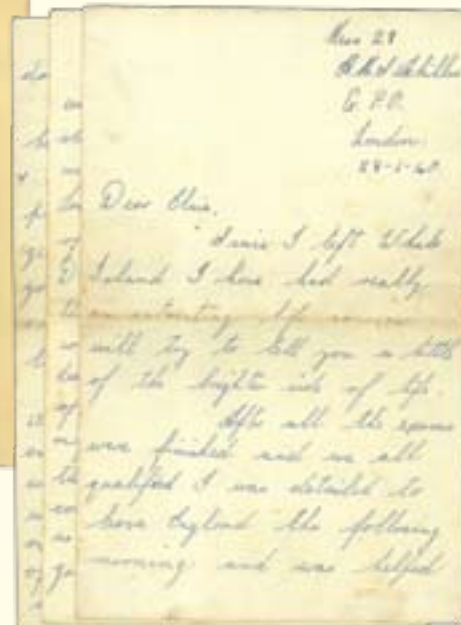
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# Complementary Collections



ABOVE: An original hand tinted photographic portrait of Colin Frew  
RIGHT: Letter to Elsie Morris from Colin Frew.



A recent donation of letters from Colin Frew, a New Zealand naval rating, to a British woman who befriended him offers an interesting insight into the life of one of New Zealand's sailors.

BY CLAIRE FREEMAN

**MUSEUM COLLECTIONS** are interwoven and interconnected; a single story is often supported by a range of different objects from varying sources. A recent donation to the Navy Museum illustrates this point. The donation consists of letters sent from Colin Frew, a New Zealand naval rating, to Elsie Morris, a British woman who befriended him. It was donated by Elsie Morris' nephew, Gerald Houston, who sent the material from his home in the United Kingdom. Unbeknown to him, the museum already holds a collection of Colin Frew's own material, mainly photographs and ephemera.

Elsie Margery Morris (1907-2006) worked in Portsmouth during the war, probably at the Records Office. She saw many ships and, as her nephew recalls, she "got to know the men of Achilles".<sup>1</sup> She struck up a friendship with Colin Frew early in the war and a correspondence began.

Colin Frew was born in 1912 and joined the Navy as a seaman boy in 1928,

working his way up to Chief Petty Officer before being discharged in 1948. He served New Zealand in the Second World War aboard some of the country's most distinguished ships including Achilles, Leander and Gambia.

The recently donated collection is small, comprising only three letters as well as a portrait photograph, postcards and some related ephemera. The letters, dating from 1940 and late 1943, cover news of Colin's family in New Zealand as well his war service. He talks of places he visited while at sea as well as his frustration at later being posted ashore, "I am in a nice soft job ashore worse luck as I would love very much to keep on at the Japs and feel it very hard being out of all the fun so will try and get back to sea again at the first opportunity."<sup>2</sup>

Colin's letters also include brief accounts of the battles of the River Plate, aboard Achilles (1939), and Kolombangara, aboard Leander (1943). At the River Plate battle,

Colin recalled the power of propaganda, "As we [Achilles] were patrolling outside Montevideo waiting for her [the Graf Spee] to come out, the BBC broadcast that there were eleven [Allied] ships outside and until they denied this after the Graf Spee's ignoble end, it even had us fooled."<sup>3</sup>

It is unknown if Colin and Elsie kept in contact after the war. Colin Frew's own collection does not include any reference to Elsie Morris. However, the two collections complement each other and offer a fascinating and very personal view of Navy life. ■

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.

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Windsor Reserve, Devonport. 2008

## The Windsor Reserve

The Windsor Reserve, alongside the Devonport Wharf, is today a peaceful village green replete with band rotunda, library and a children's playground and is the venue for brass band concerts and the Devonport Food and Wine Festival. It is here where the Navy in New Zealand had its beginnings. The first 50 years of the country's Naval Base are recorded on a series of memorial plaques that are dotted across the Reserve as a reminder that the Navy has had a presence here as long as there has been an Auckland.

Here, the third in a series of articles linking the Royal New Zealand Navy to the local history of Devonport, Russ Glackin explores the humble beginnings of Windsor Reserve.



Naval Reserve Carpenters Shop, Devonport, 1897

Captain James Cook RN, while sailing past the Waitemata Harbour during his circumnavigations of New Zealand records a note in his journal that the islands in the Gulf may conceal an excellent harbour. It was left to our first Governor, Captain William Hobson RN, to appreciate the harbour's attributes. Hobson established his capital on the south side of the harbour and raised his flag on Point Britomart on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1840 before giving his site a naval name after Lord Auckland, George Eden, the First Lord of the Admiralty when Hobson received his commission. A bronze statue of ►



Lord Auckland stands in Aotea Square today to remind us.

The Governor’s new capital in Auckland meant increasing visits from the Royal Navy’s Australasian Squadron in Sydney bringing mail, officialdom and essential stores, all of which demanded substantial support facilities ashore. The Navy fortified the shallow southern side of the harbour in favour of a deeper anchorage on the northern side. A flagstaff was raised on Mount Victoria as a visual signal station and the flagstaff was moved down onto the sandspit in 1841 resulting in the name Flagstaff for early Devonport. The flagstaff remains today with a plaque at its foot recording this as “the actual site of the birthplace of the New Zealand Navy as in 1840 naval vessels had their stores and repair depots in this area”. Beside it another plaque marks the “initial station of hydrographic surveys” or the base point used by HMS Acheron in 1849 when the Navy started its survey of the Waitemata. The flagstaff was soon followed by a magazine built on rocks running out into the harbour and a shed to serve as a boat shop and store thus establishing the first Naval Base in Devonport. Lietenant Robert Snow was appointed by Hobson to take charge of this expansion at Flagstaff and act as signalman so he effectively became the first officer in charge, Auckland. Sadly Snow and his family came to a sticky end in 1847 when they were hacked to death with a tomahawk by one Joseph Burns. A plaque marks the spot where a scaffold was erected on the scene of the crime, as was the custom of the time and Burns was given a public hanging, the first European to be officially executed in New Zealand.

The shore establishment at Flagstaff



Execution Site Plaque along King Edward Parade.

escalated in size with the onset of the New Zealand Wars. The officer commanding the Australasian Squadron, Commodore Wiseman, approached Governor Grey and the Admiralty in London for permission to establish better facilities for his ships on the Naval Reserve at Devonport to enable improved supply to Imperial troops fighting in the Waikato War. The willingness of Grey to grant the land to Britain was not shared by the Admiralty who were opposed to any permanent form of naval establishment in Auckland sanctioning only such temporary measures as demanded by the war. The long delay in communications from London enabled Wiseman to complete building a two-storey wooden barracks accommodation for ships companies and Naval Volunteers in training with spaces for stores and workshops before the Admiralty limitations on his actions arrived in Auckland. Wiseman thus firmly entrenched the Navy on the Naval Reserve at Flagstaff which had now become a flourishing borough of

Auckland called Devonport.

The end of the New Zealand Wars soon resulted in the Borough Council casting a covetous eye upon the Naval Reserve and its prime location on the Devonport foreshore. This acquisition, however, was delayed by the onset of the Russian War Scares in the 1880s when a special boatshed was built on the Reserve to house one of the Thornycroft torpedo boats allocated to Auckland. The Council’s opportunity to acquire came with the end of the Russian Scares and the completion of the Auckland Harbour Board’s dry dock at Calliope Point in 1888. This facility naturally led to the congregation of ships of all types in its periphery and away from the Naval Reserve. Further delays occurred due to the struggle between Auckland and Sydney to become the major naval base for the Australasian Naval Squadron. The issue was finally resolved in 1890 when the Mayor of Devonport offered an alternative site to the Reserve comprising about a hectare of reclaimed land created



Borough Reserve August 1902, Devonport. It was renamed Windsor Reserve in 1911

by the spoil from the construction of the dry dock hard by its side. The Admiralty promptly accepted the offer and the Naval Reserve was swapped for the reclaimed area around the dry dock which today is the foundation of the naval base, HMNZS Philomel.

The Naval Reserve became the Borough Reserve and then the Windsor Reserve in 1911. Wiseman’s barracks were burned down in 1897, an event strangely at odds with an intriguing plaque directly across from the Esplanade Hotel. Rumour has it that

this plaque was erected in 1983 by several of the many rascals in Devonport. It was brought back from England where one of them had been involved in the Admiral’s Cup yachting series. Another, who was at that time building the new wharf inside the naval base, “donated” the reinforcing steel and the concrete. In the dark of the night with look-outs carefully posted, the hole was dug, the concrete mixed and the plaque proudly erected where it still remains today. What does it say?

‘On this site in 1897 nothing happened’. ■



Russ Glackin is a part-time Guide in the Navy Museum and recently retired as the HOD History and Social Studies at Westlake Boys High School.



Auckland Naval Volunteers, Flagstaff, Devonport 1885. Wooden naval barracks can be viewed in the background.



# The Navy's Author Grant Howard

BY CLIFF HEYWOOD

It is with great sadness that we report the death of respected naval historian and author, Grant Howard who passed away peacefully in Waitakere Hospital in January 2008.

It was while the HMS Achilles visited New Plymouth in 1938 that the ten year old Grant fell in love with the Navy. He initially began a career in journalism at the New Zealand Herald in 1946. His involvement with the Navy began in 1948 when he spent three years as a member of the RNZNVR at HMNZS Ngapona. From 1951-54 he was the naval reporter for the Herald before he moved into radio and later television news. In 1962 he stepped back into uniform, joining the RNZN as the Naval Information Officer.

Grant recalled recently that his eight year short service commission was one of the happiest times of his life, as outside his normal duties he was able to devote much of his spare time to studying New Zealand's rich naval history. After leaving the Navy and returning to journalism, Grant spent 13 years with the Sea Cadet Corps, nine of them



LEFT TO RIGHT: Former Mayor of Devonport, Mr P. Sheehan, Grant Howard, Commodore L. Temporo (Commodore Auckland), 1983.



Grant Howard (Left) with the Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Ledson, at the launch of Grant Howard's last book 'Gunner Billy' which is for sale through the Navy Museum shop.

as Commanding Officer of TS Leander - an association he was to maintain throughout his life.

He wrote many books about our Navy, his first 'The Navy in New Zealand' was published in 1981 and was followed by his history of the Women's Royal New Zealand Naval Service titled 'Happy in the Service' in 1988. In 1991 'Portrait of a Navy', was written to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the royal recognition of the RNZN.

His latest book, titled 'Gunner Billy' detailing the life and times of Lieutenant Commander William Sanders VC DSO, is likely to be regarded as one of Grant's best.

Grant has always been a dedicated and loyal supporter of the Navy and its museum. He has written many articles for the museum and was until recently a regular contributor to 'The White Ensign' and its predecessor 'The Raggie'. We have been very fortunate to receive Grant Howard's tireless support over the years. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Liz and her family at this sad time. ■

Cliff Heywood is the Deputy Director of the Navy Museum. Cliff was formerly the Collection Manager and has been working within the Museum for 16 years.

## I bet you didn't know...

Six years ago the Calliope dry dock in Devonport sparked as the magnificent 'host' of the Louis Vuitton Cup Party. Yet over 100 years previously, the site saw an equally spectacular and glittering event – the Devonport Venetian Carnival

BY DEBBIE MCKINNEY



Calliope Dock under construction, 1888.

THE CALLIOPE DRY dock located in the Devonport naval base was completed in 1888 and was at the time the largest dry dock in the southern hemisphere.

Over the years the dry dock has been the temporary home for a great many vessels undergoing maintenance or being repaired following war damage. On occasion though, the dock has also been used for other activities such as swimming competitions, one of which involved a young Bernard Freyburg, as well as the venue for spectacular celebrations. In 2002 the Louis Vuitton Cup Party was held in the Calliope dry dock. This was a magnificent event hosting international glitterati and America's Cup sailors from around the world. The party was themed as a magical underwater experience including ice sculptures and theatrical tellings of mystical tales of the deep, all set under a haze of deep blue lights. A highlight of the party was the large scale model America's Cup boats sailing overhead. It was truly like being underwater.

In March, 1921 a similar occasion known as the Devonport Venetian carnival was held in the dry dock. Thousands made the journey from Auckland by ferry to take part with hundreds of locals arriving early for the grandstand view.

The carnival began at 8pm with a

procession of decorated launches and yachts from Auckland. The procession was led by Mr W.A. Wilson, the carnival marshal, on his decorated Venetian launch Winsome representing a Venetian gondola. The procession included a genuine Venetian gondola and a Chinese junk.

A festive Chinese atmosphere was created by countless Chinese lanterns floating in the dock water. The highlight of the evening was the decorated boat competition. One entry was by the stokers of HMS Philomel, dressed as Hawaiians paddling one of the ships whalers up and down the dock with coal-heaving shovels singing Hawaiian songs.

The event was not complete until King Neptune visited and held his court. Neptune's helpers called the 'pollywogs', sailors from HMS Philomel chased the local lads around the dock and when caught they were ceremonially shaved and dunked in the water.

The carnival concluded when the boat procession returned to the Admiralty Steps, with its VIP passengers. The dry dock once again playing an important part in the life of Auckland and the North Shore community. ■

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

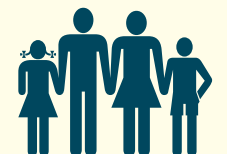
READ ALL ABOUT IT!

## What's going on at the Navy Museum?

Despite the Navy Museum's current closure to the public for maintenance, the education department has been very busy delivering our naval heritage programmes to naval Basic Class recruits and Petty Officer Courses. Westlake Boys High, Westlake Girls High, St. Mary's School and Whangaparaoa College have all visited to complete their research assessments, had base tours and enjoyed lunch at the galley. The Education department has also provided a very successful April school holiday programme at Devonport Library.

The Exhibitions department have also been busy developing a Timeline display where our Navy's strong identity in New Zealand's economic and cultural development is explored. This should be up and running in June this year. Later this year in September another exhibition is planned to commemorate Operation Grapple and looks at our Navy's involvement with the 1957-8 British atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific. ■

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