

SECTION XIV.—VISITS FROM FOREIGN WARSHIPS.

60. One foreign warship visited New Zealand, in March, 1940.

SECTION XV. OTHER WAR ACTIVITIES.

Examination and Naval Control Service.

61. As soon as war seemed to be imminent, and actually before the outbreak of hostilities, the Naval Board established port-war signal stations, an examination service, and a naval control service at the three defended ports, which are Wellington, Auckland, and Lyttelton.

62. The signal stations are manned by men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In some cases the men were accommodated at first in tents; now, however, buildings have been erected in which they can live in comfortable conditions.

63. It is the duty of the examination service, in co-operation with the military defences, to ensure that no enemy vessel can enter harbour undetected. This service, which continues day and night, is maintained partly by men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and partly by Harbour Board pilots, and the ships engaged in the work are manned by the mercantile marine. At Auckland the service is augmented by naval patrol launches.

64. The principal functions of the naval control service are to ensure that merchant ships shall, so far as possible, proceed upon their lawful occasions in safety, for which purpose they are specially routed; and to deal, generally, with all matters affecting merchant shipping, including the organization of convoy. Most of this work is being performed by personnel of the New Zealand Naval Reserves.

65. Although not a naval service, it is not inappropriate here to mention the coast watching stations, over sixty (now reduced to under forty) of which were established at the beginning of the war around the coasts. They are manned by returned soldiers, men of the lighthouse service, and Harbour Board employees.

66. Mention should be made of the vital part which wireless and other communications play in naval defence. In this connection the Post and Telegraph Department has co-operated most successfully with the naval authorities.

Defensive Equipment of Merchant Ships.

67. Another very important item in the naval defence of the Empire and the protection of merchant shipping is the arming of merchant ships so that they can act in their own defence when attacked by the enemy on the high seas. The naval dockyard at Auckland has, up to date, equipped twenty-two ships with guns of 4 in. or higher calibre, and each of those ships has sailed from Auckland with a gun's crew the nucleus of which is formed by three seamen of the New Zealand Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In addition, seven overseas merchant ships have been equipped with depth charges. This work of arming merchant ships and manning their guns is continuing steadily.

Merchant Navy Defence Courses and Instruction of Personnel of the Mercantile Marine.

68. Prior to the war it was approved in principle to institute Merchant Navy Defence Courses in New Zealand, but for various reasons it was not practicable to provide the additional staff required.

69. Shortly before the outbreak of war the naval staff at Wellington was increased and arrangements were made, in conjunction with the shipping companies operating in New Zealand, to start a course as soon as practicable.

70. The object of the course is to inform officers of the merchant navy of, and to instruct them in, the measures employed to protect British and Allied merchant ships from enemy action in time of war. The course embraces lectures on the general principles of trade protection, defence against enemy submarines and raiders, and convoy organization, and includes practical instruction in gunnery, depth charges, and signalling.

71. The course in New Zealand is primarily intended for officers of the mercantile marine who are actively employed in the New Zealand coastal and inter-colonial trades. The attendances to date include approximately one hundred and fifty of these officers and, in addition, a number of master mariners who have retired from the sea but are ready to resume their profession if required. Officers of overseas ships visiting Wellington are also invited to attend.

72. At Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, and Dunedin facilities exist for the practical instruction of officers and men of defensively equipped merchant ships in gunnery, depth charges, and signalling. The response has been excellent and is much appreciated by the masters of overseas ships visiting New Zealand. At Auckland, in addition, special instruction in W/T matters is given to deck officers and radio operators. This work is carried out by the naval control service staffs.

SECTION XVI.—TRAINING POLICY.

73. A contract has been let for three small training-vessels somewhat similar to trawlers. These vessels are being built at Leith in Scotland, and will be armed with a 4 in. gun and smaller weapons and equipped for mine-sweeping and anti-submarine work.

74. These ships will be named H.M.S. "Moa," H.M.S. "Kiwi," and H.M.S. "Tui," and will, it is anticipated, be ready for service in about fifteen months' time. In addition to their training duties they should form a valuable addition to the naval defence of New Zealand.

75. During the year the policy of manning the New Zealand Naval Forces wholly by New Zealand officers and men has been steadily pursued so far as possible. The decision to undertake the training of recruits at the instructional establishment at Devonport is an important step in progress.