

by the ship from mines caught in the sweeps and drags, and throughout the period minesweepers of the Royal New Zealand Navy destroyed forty-one mines which would have menaced the safety of the ship and personnel.

It was not until February of 1942 that any news of the story was published, and with the publication of the full story in the papers throughout New Zealand and, in fact, throughout the world ended one of the most secret operations carried out in New Zealand.

LIGHTS AND BEACONS

To the layman there will always be something romantic about a lighthouse. Something remote and mysterious which appeals to the casual passer-by seems to have been built into the towering structure from the top of which the welcoming light sends its encouraging gleams across the moody seas to the ultimate comfort and assistance of the ships' navigators.

To the keepers and to the Department, lighthouses mean something entirely different: to them there is no romance and still less mystery, especially in time of war.

New Zealand, with its rocky, cliff-bound coasts, has many lighthouses, some with resident keepers who live within comparatively easy reach of coastal towns and cities, while on remote headlands and surf-bound islets there are others who live as a small community in a solitude broken in peacetime by the regular visits of the Government lighthouse vessel with its welcome cargo of amenities and comforts of all kinds. Unfortunately, when peace goes it takes with it most of those things which go a long way towards making life on a lighthouse reasonably happy.

Gone are the regular visits with their exchange of gossip and gleanings of news from outside, gone also are the regular mails and stores, and in their place come uncertainty and additional hard work.

In 1937 the first taste of what was to come soured on the palates of principal keepers of lighthouses in the territory controlled by the Marine Department when letters were received with orders relating to the extinguishing of the lights in an event of an emergency.

At this time, also, Harbour Boards were requested to co-operate in the advising of keepers and in the extinguishing of automatic lights.

In 1938 once again the whole emergency procedure was brought to life when keepers were given further instructions relating to the extinguishing of their lights and the institution of a continuous coast-watch. At this time, also, instructions were given that arrangements made with various vessels regarding radio D.F. signals were to be cancelled.

Then at last the long-dreaded moment arrived, and in 1939 all Government services were on a war footing; but the lights still shone.

At this stage keepers were advised that they may be ordered to extinguish the lights and that a continuous watch was to be kept for signals from the naval officer in charge of their territory.

At the outbreak of war some few lighthouses not connected with telephone were supplied with radio receivers, while on some stations naval and Army detachments were encamped for the purpose of coast-watching.

On the 15th December, 1939, the lights of Suva Harbour were extinguished until further notice, and before long many of the lights on the New Zealand coast went out for varying periods, while most of those remaining were shown at about half power only.

In reply to a telegram instructing him to extinguish the Matakawa automatic light, Mr. E. T. Hughes, of Hicks Bay, replied: "Require key of Matakawa Lighthouse urgently instructions for 23rd December will be carried out irrespective. E. T. Hughes." The Matakawa light was put out on the 23rd December as required.