

1933.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND NAVAL FORCES.

REPORT OF THE COMMODORE COMMANDING THE NEW ZEALAND STATION FOR THE
PERIOD 1st APRIL, 1932, TO 31st MARCH, 1933.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency the Governor-General.

REPORT.

The Honourable the Minister of Defence.

SIR:—

H.M.S. "Dunedin," at Auckland, 8th September, 1933.

I have the honour to address to you the following report on the Naval Forces of the Dominion and the proceedings of the New Zealand Station during the year 1st April, 1932, to 31st March, 1933:—

I. STATE.

The New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy on the 31st March, 1933, consisted of—

H.M.S. "Diomedé" (wearing the broad pendant of the Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station), H.M.S. "Dunedin," H.M.S. "Philomel," non-seagoing training and depot ship at Devonport, Auckland. H.M.S. "Wakakura" (trawler), and R.F.A. "Nucula," the squadron oiler.

2. H.M. Ships "Veronica" and "Laburnum," maintained at the expense of the Imperial Government, are also employed on the New Zealand Station under the orders of the Commodore Commanding.

II. PERSONNEL (ACTIVE SERVICE).

3. On the 17th April, 1932, I assumed command of the New Zealand Station, and took over the duties of First Naval Member of the Naval Board, in succession to Rear-Admiral Geoffrey Blake, C.B., D.S.O.

H.M.S. "Dunedin" was recommissioned at Chatham on the 26th May, 1932, by Captain Martin J. C. de Meric, M.V.O., Royal Navy.

Paymaster Commander Richard F. Durman, Royal Navy, relieved Paymaster Commander John T. V. Webster, D.S.O., Royal Navy, as Secretary to the Commodore Commanding, and Naval Secretary to the Naval Board, in May, 1932.

4. On the concluding date of this report there were 460 ratings on the active list who had been recruited in New Zealand, and twenty-six ex-Imperial ratings who had been accepted for permanent service in the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. The ships' companies were completed by 452 ratings loaned from the Imperial Service.

Petty Officer George R. Davis-Goff was appointed Warrant Officer on the 11th July, 1932, being the first New Zealand rating to be promoted to that rank.

5. Recruiting during the year was satisfactory, and the candidates entered included 43 boys for the Seaman and Communications Branches, 1 Engine-room artificer and 10 stokers, and 11 ratings for miscellaneous branches, making a total of 65.

Twenty-two New Zealand ratings were discharged during the year.

6. The entry of ratings has been restricted for some time to the bare numbers necessary to keep the complements of the ships and establishments complete, no margin being allowed for special courses of instruction, or for ratings being attached to the Imperial Service in order to obtain the wider experience so desirable from the point of view of efficiency, and also that of the men's own future.

Proposals for improving the position are under consideration.

7. The health and discipline of the ships' companies have been satisfactory.

III. PERSONNEL, ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (N.Z.D.).

8. The Royal Naval Reserve is composed in the main of officers and ratings who have served their time on the Active List, and those who follow the sea as their profession in the mercantile marine and undertake to perform naval training during peace.

The strength of this Reserve on the 31st March, 1933, was as follows: Officers, 5; men, 233.

The establishment of officers of the Royal Naval Reserve is still far from complete, but the conditions of training have been modified with the view to facilitating entry, and the new arrangements are already under trial.

IV. PERSONNEL, ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE (N.Z.D.).

9. The officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, who are not necessarily professional seamen, receive instruction at their Divisional Headquarters, and embark for annual training in H.M.S. "Wakakura" or in one of the cruisers.

The numbers borne on the 31st March, 1933, were as follows: Officers—List I, 61: List II, 17. Men—List I, 576: List II, 381.

10. H.M.S. "Wakakura" has been employed during the greater part of the year in training the personnel of the Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago Divisions in seamanship, mine-sweeping, and gunnery. The training has been carried out with enthusiasm, and with very satisfactory results.

Financial considerations have precluded the provision of the second mine-sweeping vessel recommended by my predecessor in his report for 1931–32, and the training of the Reserve is much handicapped by the consequent lack of adequate facilities for mine-sweeping demonstration and for the training of officers in navigation, &c. It is considered that the provision of a second vessel should not be further deferred.

Schemes for the reorganization of the signal and telegraphist branches of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve were approved during the year, and are in process of consolidation. The seagoing training of these two classes of ratings is carried out on board the cruisers, and the standard of efficiency is steadily improving.

I inspected all R.N.V.R. Divisions at their headquarters during the year, and was much impressed with their high standard of efficiency. The keenness of the officers and men is well maintained.

The accommodation and facilities at the headquarters of the Otago Division are not satisfactory, and it is desirable that the alterations proposed at the time the building was purchased in 1930 should be taken in hand as early as practicable, or, alternatively, that the headquarters should be transferred to more suitable premises.

V. PROCEEDINGS (CRUISERS OF N.Z. DIVISION).

H.M.S. "Diomedé."

11. On the 1st April, 1932, H.M.S. "Diomedé" was at Picton, and from there proceeded via Powerful Bay to Wellington, where she arrived on the 9th April.

The ship's company then carried out their annual musketry training at Trentham Camp.

H.M.S. "Diomedé" sailed for Auckland on the 30th April, exercises being carried out with aircraft from Hobsonville during the passage into Hauraki Gulf. The ship remained at Auckland from the 2nd May to 27th June for the purposes of docking, refitting, and granting the usual leave.

On the 28th June "Diomedé" sailed for a cruise in the Pacific Islands, anti-aircraft practice being carried out at a Fairey III F machine from Hobsonville while passing through the Hauraki Gulf.

Visits were made to Nukualofa, Rarotonga, Papeete, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Pago Pago, Apia, Suva, and Lautoka. At Nukualofa I was received in audience by Her Majesty the Queen of Tonga. The Bishop of Polynesia, who wished to take the opportunity of visiting his diocese, embarked on the 7th July, and remained with us until our arrival at Suva. At Papeete, the French Administrator for the northern group of islands embarked at my invitation and accompanied us to Raiatea, where he has his headquarters.

At Bora Bora H.M.S. "Dunedin" rejoined my flag after being absent from the station since February, 1931, and at Lautoka H.M. Ships "Veronica" and "Laburnum" were already present.

"Diomedé" returned to Auckland on the 26th August.

The period 13th to 20th September was devoted to gunnery and torpedo practices in the Hauraki Gulf with "Dunedin" in company.

The two cruisers sailed for the South Island cruise on the 3rd October, carrying out high-angle firings at a towed target, and other gunnery and strategical exercises, before parting company on the following day.

"Diomedé" arrived at Wellington on the 5th October, where she remained two days, and then visited New Plymouth, Bluff, Dunedin, Timaru, and Lyttelton. I carried out my annual inspection of the ship during this period.

"Diomedé" then returned to Wellington, where I disembarked for duty at the Navy Office, rejoining the ship at Auckland on the 6th December.

The half-yearly list of promotions was received on the 1st January, and contained information that Commander V. A. C. Crutchley, V.C., D.S.C., Royal Navy, had been promoted to Captain, and Lieutenant-Commander A. W. Clarke, Royal Navy, to Commander.

The period 3rd to 16th January was spent in Omaha and Kawau Bays, the ship's company being landed for field training and accommodated under canvas. The Permanent Air Force co-operated in the field exercises, and the officers and men concerned derived considerable benefit from the operations.

"Diomedé" returned to Auckland on the 16th January, when the two cruisers held their annual aquatic sports, and competed in pulling and sailing races which the Committee of the Auckland Anniversary Regatta had kindly arranged for Service whalers.

From the 8th to 15th February "Diomedé" and "Dunedin" were again in the Hauraki Gulf, the time being devoted to gunnery, torpedo, and general exercises, in which the Permanent Air Force co-operated. These exercises afforded most valuable training.

The two cruisers sailed for their autumn cruise on the 21st February, the annual sailing regatta being held at Russell and the annual pulling regatta at Whangaroa.

On the 4th March "Diomedé" and "Dunedin" sailed for Napier and New Plymouth respectively, rejoining at Wellington, where the Royal Marine detachments of both ships were landed for their annual training at Trentham Camp.

The cruisers sailed in company on the 13th March and carried out exercises in Cook Strait, parting company on the following morning.

"Diomedé" then visited Dunedin and Lyttelton, and returned to Wellington on the 31st March. A most successful full-power trial was carried out during the passage from Lyttelton to Wellington.

H.M.S. "Dunedin."

12. As stated above, H.M.S. "Dunedin" was recommissioned at Chatham on the 26th May, 1932, and rejoined the flag of the Commodore Commanding at Bora Bora on the 20th July, after having been absent from the station since February, 1931.

The ship left the United Kingdom on the 7th June, and arrived at Auckland on the 1st August, having called at Gibraltar, Madeira, Jamaica, the Canal Zone, the Galapagos Islands, Nukuhiva, and Bora Bora. Every opportunity was taken to exercise the ship's company at the various drills and evolutions on the outward passage, and great benefit was derived by all concerned.

"Dunedin" carried out exercises in the Hauraki Gulf from the 31st August to the 12th September by herself, and from the 13th to the 20th September in company with "Diomedé."

I inspected the ship on the 17th and 18th September, and found her clean and efficient.

"Dunedin" left Auckland for Napier on the 3rd October, subsequently visiting Wellington, Nelson, the West Coast Sounds, Stewart Island, Dunedin, Akaroa, and Lyttelton, returning to Auckland on the 9th December.

The ship exercised landing parties and drills in the Hauraki Gulf from the 31st January to the 15th February, joining "Diomedé" in her gunnery and torpedo practices during the latter part of the period.

"Dunedin" left Auckland for her autumn cruise on the 21st February, visiting Russell, Whangaroa, New Plymouth, Wellington, Timaru, and Akaroa.

VI. PROCEEDINGS (H.M. SLOOPS).

13. H.M. Ships "Veronica" (Commander H. L. Morgan, C.M.G., D.S.O., Royal Navy) and "Laburnum" (Commander R. Ramsbotham, Royal Navy) arrived at Wellington on the 12th April, having spent the early part of the month visiting various ports on the east coast of the South Island.

Musketry was carried out at Trentham Camp, and on the 17th May the ships sailed for Auckland.

H.M.S. "Veronica" sailed for a two and a half months' cruise in the Pacific Islands on the 20th June, and visited various ports in New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and finally the Fiji Islands, returning to Auckland on the 6th September. Whilst at Funafuti a week was devoted to surveying the Ava i de Lape entrance to the Lagoon, which had been unfavourably reported on.

H.M.S. "Laburnum" sailed for the islands on the 13th June, visiting Suva, Apia, Pago Pago, several islands in the lower Cook and Fiji Groups, Nukualofa, and Vavau, returning to Auckland on the 19th September. His Excellency the Administrator of Western Samoa and the Secretary of Native Affairs embarked during the period 24th-30th June for the purpose of visiting various ports in the Tokolau Group, and His Excellency the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific embarked during the period 6th-14th September in order to visit Nukualofa and Vavau. While at Nukualofa Her Majesty the Queen of Tonga was invested with the Order of Dame of the British Empire by His Excellency the High Commissioner.

Captain William L. Jackson, D.S.O., Royal Navy, relieved Commander Horace L. Morgan, C.M.G., D.S.O., Royal Navy, in command of H.M.S. "Veronica" on the 3rd October, 1932.

"Veronica" and "Laburnum" sailed from Auckland on the 18th December and the 17th January, respectively, for their usual cruises in New Zealand waters, and were both at Wellington on the concluding date of this report.

VII. H.M.S. "PHILOMEL."

14. H.M.S. "Philomel" (Commander Edward L. Berthon, D.S.C., Royal Navy) continues to act as training and depot ship at Devonport, Auckland.

The prolongation of the life of the ship is still proving satisfactory, and she may be expected to remain serviceable for several years.

I inspected the ship in May, 1932, and again in February, 1933, and found everything to my entire satisfaction.

VIII. H.M.S. "WAKAKURA."

15. As stated above, H.M.S. "Wakakura" (Commissioned Gunner Thomas E. Brooker, Royal Navy) has been employed during the year almost exclusively in connection with the seagoing training of officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

She has also co-operated in gunnery practices by towing targets.

IX. R.F.A. "NUCULA."

16. R.F.A. "Nucula" (Mr. George A. Atwood, Master) was in commission from the 31st May to the 26th September, and made two voyages to San Pedro, California, for the purpose of replenishing stocks of oil fuel.

She also refuelled H.M.S. "Dunedin" at Nukuhiva, and H.M.S. "Diomedé" at Bora Bora.

X. NAVAL BASE.

17. The general appearance of the Naval Base, Devonport, is good and continues to improve, reflecting great credit on the Naval Officer in Charge, Commander Edward L. Berthon, D.S.C., Royal Navy.

18. The use of the Calliope Dock and workshops connected therewith by the Naval authorities forms the subject of a long-standing agreement with the Auckland Harbour Board, who are required to maintain the machinery and plant in substantial repair and efficient working-condition, and, when necessary, to renew such of the equipment as shall become worn out or obsolete or otherwise insufficient for the purpose of effectually repairing H.M. Ships.

A certain number of the older machines in the Harbour Board workshops were replaced during the year by others of more modern design.

XI. NAVAL ARMAMENT DEPOT.

19. Lieutenant (Retired) Herbert A. Haynes, Royal Navy, returned to the Dominion on completion of special courses of instruction in the United Kingdom, and is now employed in the dual capacity of Inspecting Officer of Naval Ordnance and Armament Supply Officer. He has performed the duties with ability, and the depot reflects much credit on the officer and his staff.

The works approved to be carried out during 1932-33 had been practically completed at the close of the financial year.

Other work to be undertaken includes the replacement of a defective shell-store (estimated cost, £310) and the construction of an additional magazine (estimated cost, £700). The former will be constructed during 1933-34, and provision will be made for the latter as finance permits.

XII. VISITS OF FOREIGN WARSHIPS.

20. The only foreign warships which visited New Zealand during the year were the Japanese Cadet Training Ships "Asama" and "Iwate."

XIII. DRILLS, EXERCISES, AND TRAINING AFLOAT, AND GENERAL REMARKS.

21. The long absence of H.M.S. "Dunedin" from the Station (February, 1931, to August, 1932) had restricted the scope of exercises, &c., and her return was most welcome.

The two main exercise periods in the Hauraki Gulf—regrettably short though they were—were sufficient to raise the fighting efficiency of the Division to a creditable standard. The results of both gunnery and torpedo practices compare favourably with those of other commands.

22. The Permanent Air Force at Hobsonville has rendered the same valuable assistance to the Division as in previous years, and their co-operation in combined exercises has been faultless.

23. Unfortunately, combined operations with the Military Forces have not been possible during the year.

The military authorities and rifle clubs at the various New Zealand ports have granted every facility for the use of their ranges, and great benefit has been derived therefrom.

It would be beneficial if the Royal Marines of H.M. Ships "Dunedin" and "Diomedé" could be afforded opportunities of working with higher formations, and it is hoped that arrangements may be made for the detachments to attend military camps from time to time.

24. The Harbour Boards and their staffs have assisted H.M. Ships in every way possible, and I am very glad of this opportunity of expressing not only my own appreciation of their assistance, but also that of my Commanding Officers.

XIV. POLICY.

25. As explained in my predecessor's report for 1931-32, the Naval Defence estimates for 1932-33 were based on the minimum sum required to maintain existing services, and no provision was made for development in accordance with the requirements of local naval defence and approved policy.

The year 1932-33, therefore, has been one of consolidation, rather than progress.

Consideration, however, has been given to a number of important matters, and the resulting proposals will be placed before you in due course.

26. The charting of the coast-line of New Zealand has been given preliminary consideration in conjunction with the Admiralty, and proposals for a resurvey will be placed before the Government on receipt of more detailed particulars as to estimated cost.

I have, &c.,

F. BURGESS WATSON,
Commodore Commanding New Zealand Station.