



## NGAPONA EX MEMBERS ASSN – LONGCAST

6 October 17 – RNZN Communicators 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Navy Museum

13 – 15 October 17 – Service Women Reunion, Northcote, Auckland

20 October 17 – Trafalgar Day Lunch at Te Atatu RSA

20 October 17 - Old Salts Lunch at New Lynn RSA

10-12 November 17 - Armistice weekend at Cambridge

17 November 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Titirangi RSA

19 November 17 – Northland Xmas Function.

8 December 17 – Maritime Societies' Annual Dinner, Northern Club, Auckland

15 December 17 - Old Salts Lunch at Orakei RSA

Hi Folks

### MEMORIAL SERVICE

There was a good muster for the memorial service for Edward Levin last Saturday. It is so sad that we often only learn about someones life when they have passed away. I am sorry I did not make the effort, or spend the time, to get to know Edward better as I now realise that we had a lot in common. Perhaps we should all spend a little more time with our friends, you never know when it will be too late.

### COUNT FELIX VON LUCKNER

Count von Luckner was a colourful, charismatic and enigmatic character, who left an indelible mark upon New Zealand society. He came to New Zealand as a prisoner of war after his ship SMS Seeadler was wrecked in the Society Islands and made a daring but unsuccessful escape from Motuihe Island. In 1938 he visited New Zealand, being acclaimed as an honourable foe.

Felix Von Luckner was born into an aristocratic German military family in Dresden on 9 June 1881. His family expectations were for him to become a cavalry officer, but instead he wanted to go to sea. He joined a Russian sailing ship in 1894 for Australia where he left it and spending the next seven years in a wide variety of occupations. At the age of 20 he returned to Germany and entered the Lubeck Navigation College from which he gained his Mate's Certificate and joined the Hamburg Line and also the German Naval Reserve. In 1907 he qualified for his Master's Certificate at the Papenburg Nautical College. In February 1910 he entered the Imperial German Navy

and in 1913 joined the gunboat SMS Panther on the West African Station. In 1914 he joined the new battleship SMS Kronprinz in which he served in the Battle of Jutland. Von Luckner was given command of the auxiliary cruiser SMS Seeadler, a sailing vessel and in December 1916 embarked on a commerce raiding expedition. During the next four months he managed to evade the strenuous efforts of the Royal Navy to hunt him down and sank fourteen allied merchant ships with only one loss of life to crew. In April 1917 Seeadler rounded Cape Horn and after small successes and running low on supplies headed for Mopelia Island, one of the Society Group, where it drifted onto a coral reef on 2 August. The crew managed to strip the ship of all its salvageable equipment and with their 46 prisoners, set up camp ashore. Von Luckner then decided to take five men in one of the two ship's boats, he named Cecille, with the aim of reaching Fiji, by way of the Cook Islands to capture a vessel and return to pick up the remainder of the men. Cecille made Atiu, 800 miles (1,600km) away where they passed themselves off as Americans of Dutch descent and the New Zealand Resident gave them sufficient supplies to make Aitutaki. The New Zealand Resident there was suspicious of these 'Norwegians' as they claimed to be, but had no means of detaining them. Von Luckner then sailed for Fiji, 1,000 miles (2,000km) away. He made the island of Wakaya but with his party, was arrested by the police on 21 September and imprisoned in Suva Jail. From there they were taken to New Zealand as prisoners of war in October.

Their arrival in New Zealand on **6 October 1917** provoked a hostile public reaction as it was thought that the Seeadler had sunk the passenger steamer Wairuna and imprisoned her passengers and crew when in fact it was the responsibility of the Wolf, another German raider. Initially they were held at mining base in Torpedo Bay in Devonport until November 1917 when von Luckner, his second-in-command Karl Kircheiss and with one rating as their steward, were taken to Motuihe Island in the Hauraki Gulf, which also housed interned German nationals. The other three seamen were sent to Soames Island in Wellington Harbour.

On Motuihe, Kircheiss made a sextant and as 'props' for a Christmas Concert two German naval ensigns were made, one out of a bed-sheet and another from a flour sack. The telephone line to the Island was tapped and careful preparations made for an escape, including eight merchant navy cadets being entered into the Imperial Navy. The Commandant of Motuihe had a personal launch, the Pearl, which was maintained by the internees, two of whom also manned it. On the evening of 17 December 1917, von Luckner and Kircheiss escaped from Motuihe with nine others, including five of the cadets and a Telefunken engineer, who lived in tents and huts near the trees behind the barracks building. At a prearranged signal after the arrival of the Camp Commandant in his launch (he was accompanying his daughter, who was visiting the island), they all converged from various buildings (von Luckner was in the Governor's cottage) onto the old wharf at the bottom of the hill and stole the Commandant's launch, the *Pearl*, reaching the Mercury Islands by the following morning. In order to divert attention from the escape bid, von Luckner requested permission to put on a Christmas play so any preparations for the play could be a disguise as preparations for the escape. The sails for the boat were made from a stage curtain, hand grenades were manufactured out of tin cans and gunpowder obtained by the farmer to blast tree roots, chickens were killed

and preserved (the increase in deaths being blamed on disease), and the German naval flag was made out of a sheet. The telephone wire was earthed to cut off contact with Auckland, the dingy was destroyed to stall any pursuit, the *Pearl* was packed with provisions and the motor was prepared for the long journey. A cart was then taken down from the northwest headland as a signal for everyone to board the boat and they left in the early evening without a hitch. Their goal was to get as far away from Auckland as possible, then commandeer a suitable vessel to get them to the Kermadec Islands, where they would raid the New Zealand government's stores for provisions, then sail back to Germany via South America. Von Luckner's escape from Motuihe created headlines in New Zealand and around the world because of its audacity and established von Luckner as a folk hero in New Zealand. Boaties in Auckland volunteered to help with the search, and the official New Zealand patrol consisted of 29 craft.

From the Mercury Islands, Von Luckner and his fellow internees commandeered the scow *Moa* and made it as far as the Kermadec Islands, some 1000 kilometres northeast of New Zealand, before they were captured by the New Zealand Government vessel, the *Iris*, on 21 December 1917. Von Luckner and Kircheiss were then interned on Ripapa Island in Lyttelton Harbour, before being returned to the Motuihe barracks in May 1918, where they remained until the November armistice that ended World War I. There is another story of a second planned escape attempt, although it is doubtful whether it was actually going to be carried out. The plan was to place enough supplies in a cave on the island so that several internees could hide there for a couple of weeks and pretend they had escaped. Once the search for them had been scaled down they would capture another vessel and escape. However, the armistice came and an escape plan was not needed. It is believed that some of these supplies may still be in the cave, but rock has collapsed over the entrance and the cave is now filled with sediment.

Camp Commandant: Lieutenant Colonel Charles Harcourt Turner was the commandant of the internment camp for most of the war. The escape by Von Luckner changed everything for him.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> December he returned from Auckland at 6 pm in his launch "Pearl" with his daughter. The launch should have been put on a mooring but was left tied to the wharf. The escape took place at 6.15 pm in daylight. Turner was immediately suspended for culpable negligence due to the inadequate arrangements for ensuring the security of his launch. There was a court martial. His defence said that Von Luckner exploited Turner's good nature. His friendly, relaxed methods at the internment camp had been adequate for the years he had been the commandant. Also he was under staffed and the army had actually reduced the number of personnel on the island not long before the escape. Turner was dismissed from the NZ Defence Force.

His successor was Major Samuel Charles Schofield. He ran a much stricter regime. He had no launch, the supply ship was armed and internees were not allowed out of the camp without a guard. Von Luckner and Kircheiss his navigation officer, returned to Motuihe in May 1918 and remained there until armistice on 11 November 1918. They were moved to Narrow Neck in 1919 until they were repatriated to Germany in May 1919.

After the war von Luckner embarked on the lecture circuit and several books were published about his exploits in Seeadler, in which he gained the nickname "Sea Devil". In the mid-1930s with the assistance of Hitler and the Nazi Government he embarked on a voyage around the world in his yacht Seeteufel, the 'Sea Devil', to spread a message of German friendship and goodwill. Arriving in New Zealand in 1938 he was greeted with acclaim as a gallant and honourable foe, but also with suspicion. A colourful, charismatic and enigmatic character, von Luckner left an indelible mark upon New Zealand society.

### **CNS #15**

Vice Admiral Sir Neil Anderson RNZN KBE, CB.  
Chief of Naval Staff: December 1977 – April 1980

Vice Admiral Sir Neil Anderson was born in Hastings and educated at Hastings High School. During WWII, most NZ high schools supported a School Cadet unit. In Hastings, Neil won a prize as top school Army cadet, but he displayed his commitment to the Navy: "I was the Sergeant Major of the cadets in High School. In October 44 a Brigadier came to interview me, telling me about ... the Australian Military College at Duntroon. I said, "But I am going to England ... to join the Navy. • I wanted to go to sea and it seemed the [RNZN] was a very good deal." Neil joined the RNZN in November 1944 as a Special Entry Cadet and was sent to the Royal Naval College (which had been evacuated to the Midlands). At first he found it hard. "I found I didn't fit the training; I just had to fit in somehow. My marks were not particularly good. The next term when we were training in a ship [HMS FROBISHER] they shot up. I was awarded the King's Telescope for the best all-round cadet that year. Since then I have managed to get the right results." He served under training in various RN ships from 1945-49, including HMS DUKE OF YORK (a battleship) during the Occupation of Japan. One incident that tested his leadership was at the naval China Fleet Club in Hong Kong on Christmas Eve when fighting broke out among the sailors. As the duty officer, Neil told his platoon of armed sailors: •What we are going to do to clear them out, we will go inside and we will form up at one end. Fix bayonets and we will tell everyone to leave. • we just moved them quietly outside. That was the end of it. Sport was important to him; Neil was selected for the RNZN Rugby First XV in 1950. "I once added up and I had played rugby in 50 countries. I played rugby until I was 32." As a Lieutenant, Neil was appointed as Navigator of HMNZS ROTOITI (the Loch-class frigate). He was set a good example of delegation by his Commanding Officer: "[LTCDR] Tony Blomfield would delegate. He had expectations that you would do the job." After undertaking the Royal Navy's Long 'N' specialist Navigation and Direction course Neil stayed on exchange and was appointed Navigator of HMS VANGUARD (the UK's last battleship) for the 1953 Coronation Fleet Review. This appointment speaks volumes for Neil's professional abilities and his high standing; there must have been many officers coveting that post at that time. Command at sea in 1960, CDR Anderson was appointed as the commissioning CO of HMNZS TARANAKI (F148), our second Type 12 frigate. He worked up the frigate in the UK and brought it home to New Plymouth. "Going in

command of the TARANAKI, brand new, was the most exciting thing. The sailors also enjoyed being in this new ship, with all bunks and no hammocks and all sorts of things like that. “We had great problems with one of the propeller shafts. They got it wrong somehow when the ship was being built. We went back to Portsmouth on one shaft and went into dry dock. I had planned to go to Oslo as the ship’s company’s overseas trip and we were running short of time. I said to the ship’s company, “We will go to Oslo if we possibly can, but I don’t want to take the ship to Oslo unless it is really smart. • The First Lieutenant said, “Well, we will have to paint the ship, how about painting ship in dry dock? • [Not a usual practice because of the danger of falling on to the concrete below.] I said, “Well okay, I will be the first over the side and the other one on the stage will be the First Lieutenant, • and so we did. It took more trials and another docking before the shafts were satisfactory. But there was no time to get to Oslo, instead he arranged for “a run ashore on the Continent” at St Malo, France. “And the sailors loved it. [Some even] went up to Paris.” Diplomacy In 1969 Captain Anderson organised the multi-national naval participation in the Cook Bicentenary Celebrations at Gisborne. HMNZS BLACKPOOL and ships from four other navies took part. “I went down to Gisborne for my first visit and learnt a bit about what people had in mind. I realised that I had a real problem; the Chairman of the County, the Mayor and the Chairman of the Harbour Board would not talk to each other. So I started talking to them singularly and eventually managed to get them to realise that they had to talk. They agreed that, only if I was there! In January 1973 Neil was promoted as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff. The Government wanted to protest against French atmospheric nuclear weapons testing. The Chief of Defence Staff and CDRE Anderson talked with Prime Minister Norman Kirk. I said, “Well the frigates haven’t got enough legs. You can have a frigate certainly, but you need some more fuel from somewhere. • I went back to the office and we found that there was a small ex-RFA tanker about to be scrapped. But buying the old tanker would cost half a million dollars, not what the PM had in mind. “So then I said, “Well, you will be going to see the Australian Prime Minister shortly, put the hard word on him. If you want to go to Mururoa, you can go ... providing you get a tanker. • He [Kirk] came back having talked to Whitlam. “Yes, their tanker [HMAS SUPPLY] could do the job. • HMNZS OTAGO was sent to Mururoa. The frigate maintained a radio teleprinter link directly to Navy Office; CDRE Anderson and Rear Admiral Ted Thorne (then CNS) worked watch and watch, sleeping in the office ready to respond to any query from OTAGO or, later, CANTERBURY, and be a link to the government. Flying his flag at sea In 1977 Neil was promoted to Rear Admiral and became Chief of Naval Staff. Even as a senior officer Neil had time for personal courtesies—one officer recalls missing out on a promotion, but as CNS, Admiral Anderson sent for him to explain why his class mate was to be promoted ahead of him; a kind act of understanding by the CNS that the officer concerned still remembers. The Admiral never forgot the excitement of being at sea; it is a clear theme throughout his oral history. “One day I was looking at the fleet forecast, and realised that ... we had three weeks when we were going to have all four frigates running. I said to the Commodore Auckland, “Look this is never going to happen again, to have four running together. You can have all four from Auckland to Napier and I will take over from Napier to Wellington. • “We came into [Wellington harbour] I turned them together to go along the Petone foreshore in line abreast. Then we turned in succession to come down to Wellington. That was very exciting, I liked that.” In April

1980 Admiral Anderson was promoted to Vice Admiral and posted as Chief of Defence Staff. He was known for being calm and relaxed, but with a rapid grasp of policy papers and of events. He was willing to sit down with his staff officers and expose his thoughts to the rigours of the collegial staffing process.

Rear Admiral Ray Gillbanks was a Lieutenant in 1980 and he recalls a visit by the then CDS. "He and Barbara visited HMNZS TARAPUNGA in Napier in 1980. TARAPUNGA was a newly commissioned Inshore Survey Craft; Mrs Anderson was TARAPUNGA's "launching lady" and I invited her to visit. "I knew that the Andersons were on holiday but I had expected the CDS to arrive rather more formally than he did—in their own small car, with the Admiral driving. As we welcomed them onboard it was plain to us that Admiral Anderson had set aside his status in favour of his wife. She was the guest of honour and this was her day. "However, when we went to sea to demonstrate our newly-fitted electronic surveying equipment Admiral Anderson's specialist "N" background emerged and we were very professionally quizzed. Thereafter I knew why he was held in such high regard; he was natural and friendly with the ship's company, interested in them and their roles onboard and deeply interested in the hydrographic survey work we were doing." VA Anderson was awarded the KBE in June 1982, becoming Sir Neil. His extensive RN experience meant he retained the manners of an English gentleman throughout his life, but there was no doubt that he was a loyal New Zealander with the RNZN's interests at heart. His postings overseas meant Sir Neil had an extensive professional network which he drew on throughout his career. He retired in 1983. In 2009 Sir Neil agreed to give his name to the Cup awarded to the top student of the Major Fleet Unit Navigator's Course.

A contemporary of Sir Neil, Captain Tom Riddell (Rtd), says that "Neil was a very fine officer and gentleman. He had great leadership qualities and was highly respected and generally popular with all ranks."

Sir Neil Anderson died on 5 June, aged 83. His funeral took place on 10 June at St Michaels and All Angels Anglican Church, Waikanae Beach.

Take care

**Jerry Payne**

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President

HMNZS Ngapona Ex Members Assn Inc

*"There are good ships, and there are wood ships, the ships that sail the sea."*

*"But the best ships are friendships, and may they always be."*

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