

A short newsletter due to my continuing unresolved computer issues.

HMS DEFENDER preparing to RAS with RFA TIDESURGE in challenging conditions in the North Sea at the start of exercise Joint Warrior.



THEY JUST KEEP GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER

Shanghai-based Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding (Group) built and delivered the largest container vessel in the world to Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) MSC TESSA has a container capacity of 24,116 TEUs and is the first of four same size container ships purchased by the largest container line in the world. According to Hudong-Zhonghua, a unit of China State Shipbuilding Corp (CSSC), the vessel is currently the world's largest container-ship in terms of TEU capacity. The mega container vessel measures 399.99 metres in length and 61.5 metres in width.



FINAL JOURNEY

HMS *Montrose* has set off on her final journey ahead of being decommissioned by the Royal Navy. The Type 23 frigate paid her last visit to her affiliate town of Montrose, Angus, before heading south to Portsmouth for the last time on Tuesday. HMS *Montrose* was the 11th of 13 Duke-Class frigates when she was launched in 1992. She was initially designed as a fast manoeuvrable vessel required to scout ahead of the main fleet. More recently *Montrose* has been deployed to the Gulf as an escort vessel and has seized more than 16 tonnes of illegal drugs – with a value of more than £111m – over 10 narcotic boarding missions.



ROYAL NAVY SHIPS IN NEW ZEALAND

PADDLE STEAMERS ON THE WAIKATO RIVER

Throughout the series of RN ships in New Zealand, oft times there has been mention of the paddle steamers which were used during the Waikato campaigns. *Avon*, *Pioneer*, *Koheroa* and *Rangiriri* were modified or built as military transport being used to move troops and supplies past the Maori fortifications along the Waikato and Waipa rivers. These boats were known as the "Waikato Flotilla". The Waikato River was navigable from Port Waikato to Cambridge, and the Waipa as far as Pirongia.

These gunboats were used to outflank the Maori positions at Meremere and Rangiri, and to capture Ngaruawahia.

The *Avon*. Purchased by the New Zealand Government to act as a troopship. 60 feet long and weighing 40 tons. Following a refit at Onehunga in 1862, it had been equipped with iron along its sides as protection, a Congreve rocket tube and a 12 pdr Armstrong gun. *Avon* was towed by HMS *Eclipse* to the Waikato Heads to begin its work. In Jan 1864 she was deployed into the Waipa River as she had less armour than *Pioneer* or *Koheroa*.

The *Pioneer*. Purpose built by the Sydney based Australian Steam Navigation Company for the New Zealand Government as the *Waikato*, her name was changed to *Pioneer* on reaching New Zealand. In October 1863. She was towed across the Tasman by HMS *Ecipse*. *Pioneer* was a flat-bottomed stern wheeler with a 6m beam and was 43 m long. She was outfitted in Onehunga with two fore and aft turrets protecting 12 pdr Armstrong guns. She also had firing loopholes for rifles and small arms. With a speed of 9 knots, she was powered by twin 30 hp engines. On the 31 Oct 1863, *Pioneer* was employed on transporting 600 men of the 40th and 65th Regiments (most being placed in barges which were towed by the vessel). The boat and tow were fired on as they steamed past Meremere without serious effect as the metal plating protected the vessel (the barges were also iron clad). The British force occupied a pa at Meremere which had been abandoned. After the war *Pioneer* was used for transporting supplies and settlers. She was wrecked on the Manukau Bar (1866), after slipping her moorings at Port Waikato. Her two turrets have been preserved as war memorials at Ngaruawahia and Mercer.

The *Koheroa*. A stern-wheeler, built in Sydney and shipped in sections to Putataka, the Govt's dockyard and store depot at Port Waikato, where it was assembled. *Koheroa* was a sister to the *Rangiriri*.

The *Rangiriri*. Stern-wheeler. Used to transport the first military settlers at Hamilton. Did not arrive in time from Sydney, (where it was built), to take part in the land wars.

The *Waikato* was used for freight until after the 2nd WW however shifting sand bars at Port Waikato, willow infestation and sediment build up eventually impeded navigation. Port Waikato was closed in 1955.



This turret from *Pioneer* stands in the Waikato town of Ngāruawāhia near the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato rivers. It was presented to the town by the government in 1927 and is now located on The Point, close to the band rotunda and the First World War memorial.