

HMNZS NGAPONA ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

LONGCAST

18 May 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Glen Eden RSA

4 June 18 – Queen’s Birthday

15 June 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Birkenhead RSA

15 – 18 June 18 – Greenies Weapons Electrical Reunion at Napier

30 June 18 – HMNZS Ngapona Senior Rates Mess Dinner

20 July 18 – Ngapona Assn Lunch at Pt Chevalier RSA

21 July 18 – HMNZS Ngapona Assn – Formal Dinner, Pt Chevalier RSA

17 August 18 - Ngapona Assn Lunch at Henderson RSA

29 September 18 – Comms Assn AGM - Birkenhead RSA commencing at 1100

Hi Folks

HMNZS NGAPONA ASSN LUNCH

Our lunch this month is at the Glen Eden RSA. We have not been to this RSA before so I thought we should give it a try (just for the Westies!)

Take the Great North Road through New Lynn and turn left into West Coast Road, about 2 km on the left is Glendale Road. The RSA is not far from the corner on the right hand side.

EXERCISE TROPIC MAJOR

HMNZS CANTERBURY has brought a contingent of 21 medical personnel that includes a surgeon, an anaesthetist, nurses and a scientist. The contingent is aboard the HMNZS CANTERBURY as part of Exercise Tropic Major. It is the first time the Canterbury's operating theatre and laboratory have been fully operational. With an intensive care unit, x-ray, ultra-sound facilities and a blood bank, the contingent is capable of performing operations and trauma care. Its officer in charge, Bronny Clulow, who is a registered nurse, said the contingent was a mixture of reservists and regular

forces. While in Vanuatu the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) is delivering more than 50 tonnes of relief supplies for people affected by the eruption on Ambae Island. The offshore patrol vessel HMNZS WELLINGTON is also involved in Exercise Tropic Major. The NZDF said the aim of the exercise was to give its personnel practice operating in a joint task force in a tropical environment, providing regional security and development assistance. The exercise involves a fictitious scenario in which law and order has broken down on Epi Island, prompting the Vanuatu government to request help to re-establish the rule of law and stability for its citizens. Training for members of the Vanuatu Police Force would also be provided.

Source: *shippingnewsclippings 131 dated 11-05-2018*



DID YOU KNOW?

On 15 May 1965 while in Fiordland, HMNZS *Haku* with CNS Rear Admiral Washbourn embarked, and HMNZS *Maroro* in company, anchored in Revolver Bay, Preservation Inlet. Unfortunately, the Commanding Officers had not calculated the tidal range.



HMNZS Haku and Maroro waiting for the tide to come in.

A NAVAL CAREER IN THE EYES OF COLIN ROSS - Pt. 29

After a night out in Brize Norton we piled on an RAF flight to Ascension Island where we were to meet up with HMS BACCHANTE, this was to be the RNZN's first acquisition of two Leander's to fill the fleet. HMS DIDO (SOUTHLAND) was to follow a year later.

This was a trip into the unknown, as we knew roughly where Ascension Is was but nothing really about it. The flight was pretty good and we landed in The Gambia to refuel before continuing on and out to Ascension a hunk of basically rock in the middle of the Atlantic.

As we flew into The Gambia Banjul airport and they de-pressurised the cabin suddenly the escape hatch fell into the cabin landing on the lap of a couple of startled Kiwi's. We all of course became aware that something had happen because of the sudden large increase in noise and air rushing around.

The RAF Flight Sargent came wandering down the aisle and said don't worry that often happens. After fuelling in which time we managed to scupper a couple of cool beers we were back on the plane and off on our final leg. Funny things happen but it was noticed that ten pairs of Kiwi eyes seemed to focus on the errant escape hatch during the taxi and take off. Luckily it behaved itself and stayed in place but never the less it left an uncomfortable feeling for the rest of the flight.

We flew into Ascension just after dusk so couldn't really see anything. As there were no customs etc. it was a pretty quick transition into a truck with our gear and we were transported to our accommodation for the night. This was no five star hotel! As a result of the Falklands war and Ascension Island becoming one of the transit sites, the Army had laid down a series of concrete pads and over these was the proverbial green army tent. Thoughtfully there was a stretcher supplied per person, unfortunately they were not assembled and in good Naval Tradition we discovered the bar was open across the road.

So the gear was all dumped in the tent and across the road we go to help the Island profits. After a few hours in the bar, closing time came and effectively we were sent home. It was a disaster, ten slightly inebriated Kiwis trying to assemble stretchers and climb into bed. In the morning some members had managed the task quite well, others only had one or two of the spring legs inserted correctly into the frame and were sleeping with feet or head up and the other end down. A couple had given up altogether and had just crashed out on the canvas base.

After finding the facilities in the morning and having had a scrub up plus breakfast we were loaded into a truck and taken down to the jetty to join our next posting. On the way it was interesting to observe our surroundings. It was definitely a rock in the middle of the ocean, however it did boast a golf course of limited holes and where the greens

were not smooth green grass but finely crushed rock. There must have been some interesting putts made on it.

We arrived at the jetty and noted there were four or five ships anchored off. We climbed onto a barge and headed out hoping we were not going to be taken to the rusty one, but as you may have guessed we were alongside the slightly orange Leander and told this was or next home so climb aboard.

Once all our gear was on-board and we had been welcomed to our new home we were shown to our accommodation. The Officers of course went away to the Wardroom and cabins whilst we (the remaining eight Senior Rates) were all accommodated in what was the Stewards Mess. This was the mess just aft of the turret on the port side, which incidentally was to later become part of the Warrant Officers Mess.

Next door to this mess was the Aft CPO's Recreation Space. We were quickly advised that we were part of that mess and were invited to go next door to meet our fellow crewmates. This of course turned into a bit of a party and was something of a warm welcome to our future home.

The passage back to Portsmouth took around eleven days. This was a time of finding our way around the ship, spending time researching the machinery records and also spending time in machinery spaces getting the feel of how the ship ran. It was very evident early on that it was in very serious need of a refit as well as some tender loving care.

As a personal observation, I would say that while the RN were good operators they certainly didn't spend a lot of effort on maintenance. While this may only have applied to this particular ship my experience in dealing with the RN and also RN personnel transferred out to the RNZN there are some vast differences in how we treated our ships.

In the RNZN in most cases the crew treats their ship as their home and tend to try and make it as comfortable as they can with especially small personal touches in messes and in operating machinery there is a pride in trying to ensure that maintenance is up to date and defects are rectified as soon as possible. As you will see later this created some issues for us.

As the ship was returning from a war zone, they had relaxed the routines. The ship had arrived in the Falklands just after the truce, however as no one was sure what would happen they had been in two watches for the time they were down there. The ocean around that area didn't show a lot of mercy either and the upper deck paintwork was showing some signs of the heavy weather.

It is interesting to note that one of the issues the Leander's discovered in the Falklands was the continual heavy seas and pounding through the waves most of the class suffered from cracking between the focsle and the bridge screen, thus the quick repair

method was to weld a heavy bar around the front of the bridge screen to stop water entering the Captain's Cabin and to reinforce the structure.

It was also notable to see the differences between CANTERBURY and BACCHANTE. The Captain's Cabin had a bath in it; some of the Senior Rates Messes had separate sleeping messes and recreation messes. One of the biggest differences was the number of cockroaches, the ship was infested and the crew just seemed to ignore them.

This infestation was really notable at night, with the red night-lights on in the main drag they just seemed to be a seething mass. You could hear them crunching under your sandals as you proceeded down the flat. The crew thought we were kind as we gave them a chance with our plastic sandals with only roundels underneath and not a solid sole. Every morning the cockroaches would march out with your uniform to wear for the day. There were competitions for who had the most cockies in their food, they were terrible.

Whilst in transit north the ship's crew were advised there would be no medal for the Falklands war as they arrived too late so that was a sore subject for the remainder of the journey. We spent a large amount of time putting together a refit requirement with a huge amount of jobs discovered and we wanted to get some of these job requirements home well before we heaved over the horizon to Rangitoto Island.

As the ship was running a relaxed routine there was organised sport on the flight deck each afternoon. As we were Kiwi's the assumption was we were good at sport and required to front up with a Kiwi team no matter the sport. So we were involved in deck hockey, tug of war, cricket and a few other things besides so by the time we arrived in Portsmouth some of us were feeling pretty tired and sore.

As with all ships returning from the Falklands there was a huge welcoming committee waiting to greet us. Was really amazing with the bands playing on the jetty and all the family and friends there as well. There was a type 42 berthed in front of us and they were inundated with crowds as well. As we didn't have anyone waiting we stayed out of the way pretty much but by the time we got shut down there was a pretty good party going in the mess so we had to join in.

The party transitioned ashore to one of the pubs, we were a bit late getting there but walked into a torrent of abuse from one of the wives. It turned out she lived up in Scotland and hubby had a friend! In Portsmouth. Unfortunately both the wife and the friend were there to meet the intrepid sailor, and suddenly when he appeared on the jetty there were the two women in his life both waiting for him. Somehow the wife made the conclusion that if NZ hadn't bought the ship then she would never have known about the other vying for hubby's affection. We weren't quite sure how she came to that conclusion however in good Naval Tradition we had a few pints and all seemed to be forgiven.

On arrival at home most of the crew were off on leave for two weeks so we were sort of left to our own devices. Of concern to me was that when we arrived alongside the Chief Tiff I was taking over from had a heart attack on the jetty. Although it turned out all right I was made aware of the history of Chief Tiffs on the boat. The one prior to this one had flipped his marbles, and the one prior to that had been removed with a medical issue. I did wonder what I was inheriting.

To be continued

ASCENSION ISLAND

Ascension Island is a mountainous peak rising from the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, Ascension is a dormant volcanic island like Tristan da Cunha and the Azores on the mid-Atlantic volcanic ridge.

The island lies roughly halfway between the horn of South America and Africa.

Ascension Island is part of a British Overseas Territory, (nowadays called St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha) under the sovereignty of the British Crown.

The 34 sq mile (88 sq km) island is a communications centre for the BBC, the RAF, the US Air Force and the European Space Agency. NASA also operates a Meter Class Autonomous Telescope (MCAT) on Ascension Island for tracking orbital debris.

Although a traditional port of call for ships on the Cape of Good Hope route, the few yachts that sail on this route only occasionally stop at Ascension. Because of their isolation, the people who work on the island (the island's only inhabitants) are friendly and hospitable. There is no indigenous or permanent population.

The RMS St Helena visits Ascension approximately once every three weeks on her voyage from Cape Town and St Helena.

It is planned that Ascension Island will become the Atlantic's largest marine reserve.

During the Falklands War the island was used extensively by the British military, with Operation Black Buck, the long range bombing raid, being carried out from there.

On the 18th of April 1982, Wideawake Airfield became the busiest airport in the world with over 500 aircraft movements in a single day. During the campaign, it handled 2,500 fixed wing and 10,600 helicopter flights. Furthermore, Ascension once boasted the world's longest runway. In fact, the island still serves as an emergency landing spot for the space shuttle. Wideawake Airfield is jointly administered by the U. S. and the U. K.

Today the European Space Agency also maintains a tracking station on Ascension.

This facility is used to track Ariane 5 rockets after they have been launched in French Guiana. Also, interestingly, Ascension is the location of one of the three ground antennas which are used to operate the widely-used Global Positioning System for navigation. (The other two ground antennae are situated on Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific Ocean and on Diego Garcia Atoll in the Indian Ocean.)





Take care

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Editor

HMNZS Ngapona 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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