

# NAVY

T O D A Y

TE KAHA CHANGE  
OF COMMAND

CHIEF OF NAVY  
SCHOLARSHIP

MASTERING  
MORSE CODE

# FROM THE TROPICS TO THE ICE



# Contents

- 04 From the tropics to the ice
- 12 TE KAHA Change of Command
- 14 Defence Adviser in Fiji
- 20 Working in United Nations Command
- 22 Posted to the Royal Yacht

- 26 Mastering Morse
- 30 Chief of Navy scholarship
- 31 TE MANA update
- 34 Giant uckers game



*“During the COVID outbreak, the health and welfare of our NZDF staff and families was my absolute priority, and I don’t think I truly realised just how much that responsibility weighed on my shoulders until we started to come out the other side.”*

– Commander Sarah Bamfield, Defence Adviser Fiji



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**Front Cover:**  
HMNZS AOTEAROA makes her way south to McMurdo Sound.

**Back Cover:**  
HMNZS AOTEAROA carefully pushes through sea ice.

**Photographer:**  
SGT Maria Eves



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NZDefenceForce



# Yours Aye

Commander Joint Forces



I am immensely proud to be part of our Navy as we have got stuck into another year right out of the blocks in the Pacific. The uncertainties that the COVID pandemic brings has created a challenge for us to maintain our readiness for sea, with our people stretched in many directions at once, and it seems that 2022 has decided to keep throwing significant events at us. In times of crisis we still provide the Government with valuable options, flexible capabilities, and professional, motivated and adaptable people, and as a Navy we have certainly risen to meet the latest challenge and provide our unique capabilities when and where they are needed.

New Zealand's renewed focus on the South West Pacific and the well-being of our neighbours was tested yet again with Operation Pacific Relief in Tonga in January and February. This may have been anticipated due to the high risk of tropical cyclones over the summer months, therefore it was somewhat unexpected that we responded due to a massive volcanic eruption. Even so, it was impressive to see the crew of WELLINGTON with her embarked Seasprite and Diving and Hydrographic detachments from MATATAUA quickly charge off towards the disaster. Likewise

AOTEAROA, fully expecting to peacefully prepare for a mission to the Southern Ocean, headed north instead, demonstrating that flexibility is the key to maritime power and that the capability that this fantastic new ship brings extends well beyond delivery of fuel at sea. Despite only just being back from refit CANTERBURY was not far behind, her crew putting in the mahi to conduct a SARC while NH90, HADR TU and DJIATF were preparing to embark.

Once in Tonga our Navy conducted harbour and wharf surveys of affected areas, produced and supplied more than 520,000 litres of fresh water to Tongans, conducted contactless delivery of 40 tonnes of HADR stores, and refuelled vessels of our partners from Tonga, the USN and the RN.

AOTEAROA didn't miss a beat, switching from tropical heat to polar freezing temperatures. As planned, the ship headed south to continue her introduction to service by supplying liquid and solid cargo to the Joint Logistics Pool in Antarctica, enhancing the NZDF's international reputation with our Antarctic partners along the way. This was our Navy's first Ross Sea deployment since OTAGO in 2015, and it allows us to

support a DTA-led scientific activity that the NZDF will benefit from on future missions. The images from AOTEAROA's mission to McMurdo will have people clambering for a posting to the ship before her next scheduled trip early next year.

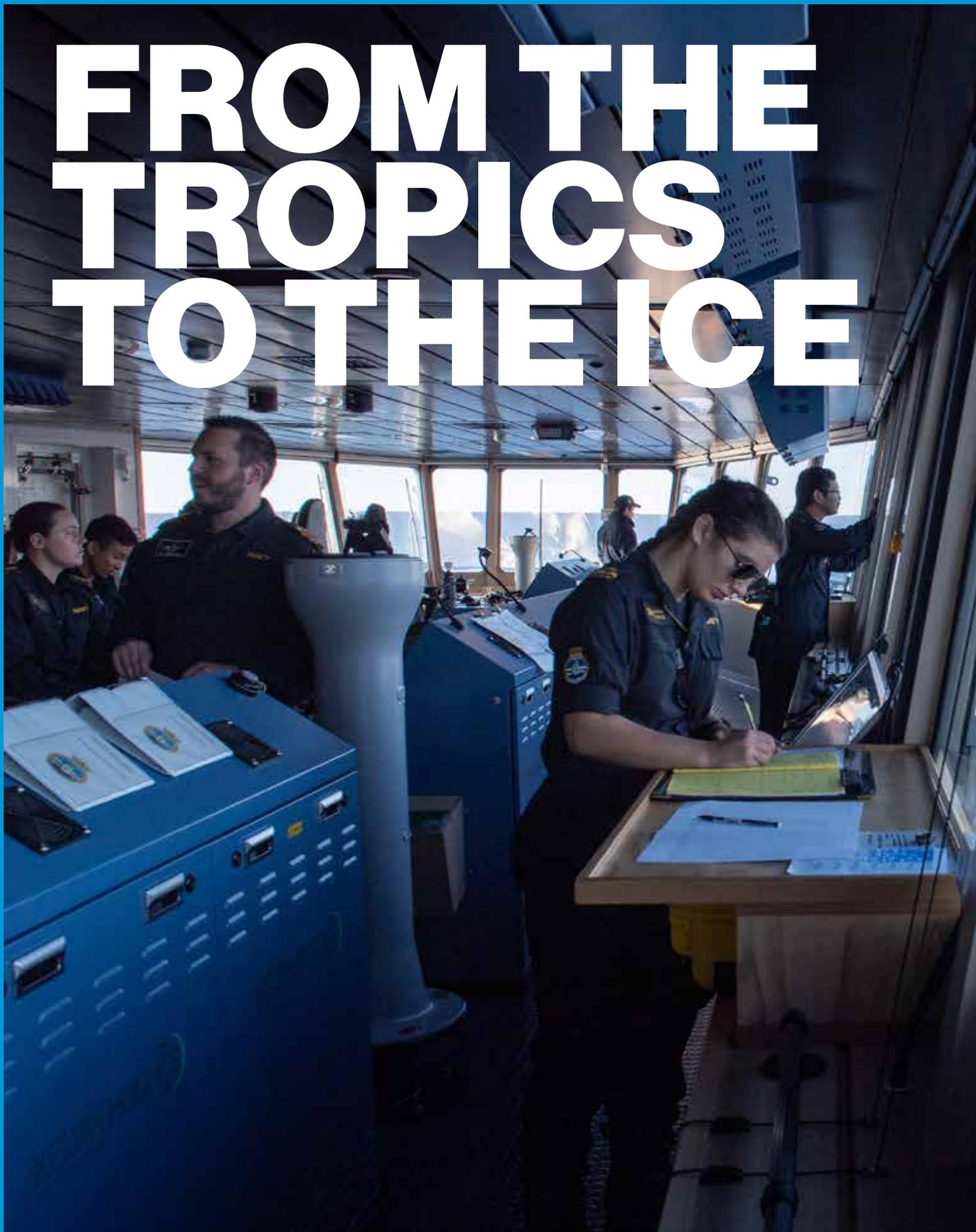
Whilst all of this was going on, our Command of Combined Maritime Force CTF 150 concluded, having achieved record narcotics intercepts at sea, depriving terrorist groups of their critical funding streams.

As we look to the future; our contribution to supporting the isolation and quarantine facilities is set to reduce, and as the Commander of Joint Forces I'm looking forward to refocusing on the next challenge of getting back into the training of our new people and regenerating our naval combat capability. We are planning on heading back in to the South West Pacific mid-year with Operation Mahi Tahī, and RIMPAC is set to keep us busy at about the same time. I trust COVID-related border restrictions will be relaxed to allow our people to get ashore and look around, wherever our Navy adventure takes us.

He Heramana Ahau

Rear Admiral Jim Gilmour  
**Commander Joint Forces**

# FROM THE TROPICS TO THE ICE





*“It’s an incredible experience, nudging your way in, you put on the power and you push your way through the ice. It scrapes, it bangs, it clangs its way down the side, but the ship is capable.”*

Captain Simon Griffiths, Commanding  
Officer HMNZS AOTEAROA

After eight days' passage from New Zealand and over 2,380 nautical miles, HMNZS AOTEAROA became the first Navy ship in over 50 years to effect a resupply to Antarctica.



The maiden supply run, combined with American cargo vessel MV OCEAN GIANT, covers the vast majority of supplies needed for New Zealand's Scott Base and the neighbouring American base, McMurdo Station.

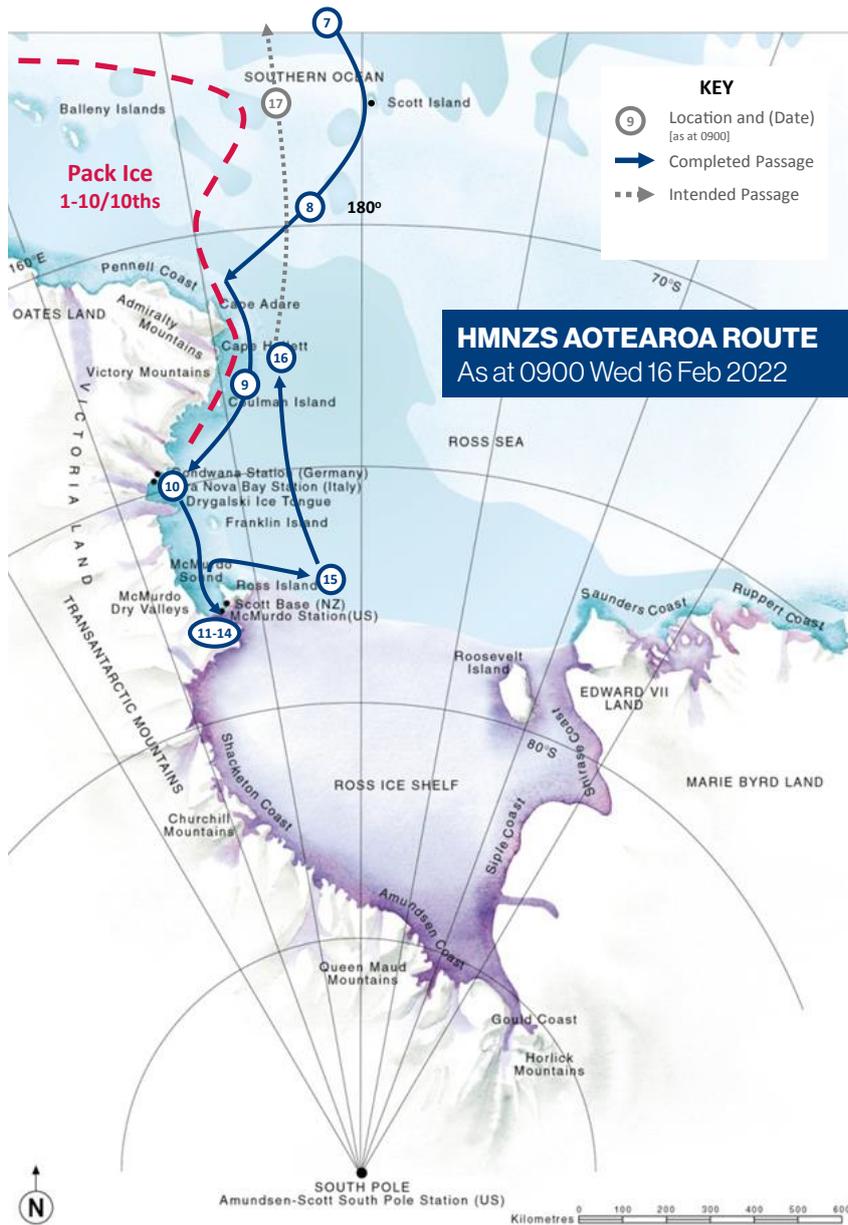
AOTEAROA, fresh from her humanitarian mission in Tonga, restocked in Lyttelton and departed on 3 February, heading south-east to the 180-degree meridian. Bad weather along that line meant heading directly south once past Stewart Island, then altering course east back to 180 degrees longitude.

One might wonder at the eight-day length of time and deviating to the International Date Line, but Commander Dave Barr, AOTEAROA's Executive Officer, has a good sense of history regarding the route to McMurdo. "If you head straight south from New Zealand to Antarctica, you come across the Balleny Islands before the continent. Due to a mix of current and prevailing weather, that generally has a permanent ice shelf around it. Mariners for generations couldn't penetrate it, which is why James Clark Ross in HMS EREBUS in 1841 sailed further east when he left Hobart, stopping at Campbell Island before heading down the 180, finding a small ice barrier and discovering what would eventually be named after him – the Ross Sea."

AOTEAROA reached 60 degrees latitude on 6 February and CDR Barr describes the "giddy" excitement of encountering their first icebergs the following day in an area known as 'iceberg alley'. "We passed Scott Island that evening, then hung a right towards Cape Adare – the site of first landing on the continent and first winter-over and first death around 1895-99."

By 9 February they were passing Coulman Island towards Terra Nova Bay, encountering their first pack ice. 10 February was devoted to scientific activities, with AOTEAROA arriving in McMurdo on 11 February.





The day was flawless, with no ice channel. “McMurdo Sound welcomed us with open arms on that beautiful Friday morning,” says CDR Barr. The United States Coast Guard Cutter POLAR STAR, an ice breaker, had created an ice channel early in the New Year, but the ice had since broken up and drifted out to sea. AOTEAROA berthed at McMurdo’s new ice pier, constructed during the 2021 winter.

Personnel could go ashore, he says. “We stayed in ‘sea watches’ throughout Friday 11<sup>th</sup> and overnight while offloading cargo and fuel, then went to Daily Harbour Routine on Saturday morning at 0800 through to Sunday evening at 1900. Personnel could explore, go on organised walks across Ross Island and tours to the Ross Ice Shelf and Hillary’s Hut at Scott Base.”

As it happened, Scott Base itself was off limits. “They go into a seven-day lockdown anytime a flight arrives (just as an extra precaution), and they were about halfway through that when we were there. So folks really enjoyed going for walks, and climbing the hills in the full daylight at one o’clock in the morning.”





## **AOTEAROA A POLAR CLASS 6 VESSEL**

Higher grade of steel plating to withstand cold temperatures

Extra thickness of steel for abrasion against ice

Increased number of scantlings (hull ribs)

Strengthened rudders and propellers

Heated side ballast tanks

Trace heating on the flight deck

'Winterised' main crane

## **AOTEAROA DELIVERED**

### **FOR SCOTT BASE:**

10,000kg of Food

4,000kg of domestic supplies, cleaning products, bedding etc

4,300kg of engineering resupply products

11,000kg of cabling

13,000 kg of hot water drill equipment

20,000 kg of drinks

### **FOR MCMURDO STATION:**

1,028,000 litres of aviation fuel





AOTEAROA's departure on 14 February was a contrast. "McMurdo Sound made us work to get out," says CDR Barr. "About six tenths ice pack had covered the top of the Sound." International convention measures ice concentration in 'tenths', with 1/10 being open water, 6/10 as a moderate density of drifting ice while 10/10 is compacted and consolidated ice. This is exactly what a Polar Class 6 vessel like AOTEAROA is designed for. "It was navigable by us, so no issues. 10/10 would have required a new channel."

The successful resupply is a significant enhancement on the New Zealand Defence Force's support to Antarctica New Zealand programmes, which have been sustained since the 1970s using RNZAF C-130 Hercules and Boeing 757s.

AOTEAROA offloaded 10 20-foot containers; OCEAN GIANT, who started her mission from California via Lyttelton, offloaded 14. The ships do not return empty. Anything that is no longer fit for purpose, disused equipment, waste and rubbish is packed into containers and sent home, says Antarctica New Zealand.



“HMNZS AOTEAROA is a fantastic addition to New Zealand’s Antarctic capabilities,” said Antarctica New Zealand Chief Executive Sarah Williamson.

“The timing couldn’t be better, with our scientific research programme and Scott Base redevelopment both requiring significant logistical support over the next several years.

“We congratulate the Navy on a successful maiden voyage – it’s a complex, collaborative effort and it went smoothly. The team gets a ngā mihi nui from us, we really appreciate the mahi they’ve done.”

Captain Simon Griffiths, Commanding Officer, says the mission proves that the Royal New Zealand Navy has once again a maritime capability that can support national programmes in Antarctica.

“Our Navy travels far and wide, and does a lot of amazing things around New Zealand, in the Pacific and much further afield. But it’s when you head south, into Antarctic waters, it really is different. The winds, and the wind chill, is phenomenal. Everything freezes down here. We’re navigating around icebergs. We’re navigating through pack ice. It is stunningly beautiful. It is a magical place, but it is also wild, dangerous, and if we don’t treat it with respect it can jump up and punch us in the nose.

AOTEAROA is amazing, but it’s the team effort that makes it possible, he says. “It’s the people on board that got us from the tropics helping Tonga, to the freezing cold of Antarctica.

*“We are incredibly proud of what we do on the ship, and proud of what we do for our Navy, but most of all we are proud of what we do for New Zealand.”*

# 'A' FLIGHT EXPANDS CANTERBURY'S REACH

Lieutenant Zach Taylor talks to *Navy Today* about the newest aviation team in town, No. 6 Squadron's 'A' Flight.



It takes a large amount of co-ordinated effort to get a helicopter off the back of a Navy ship safely and effectively. It starts well before take-off with key equipment and aviation fuel testing, moving into briefings, a risk assessment, towing the aircraft onto the Flight Deck, starting up and finding the right amount of wind to launch. During this whole process challenges could arise that need to be worked through or emergency situations develop that need a well-rehearsed response to resolve.

This is where 'A' Flight (Reduced) bridges the embarked aviation corporate knowledge gap with operating HMNZS CANTERBURY's Flight Deck. Their presence enabled the embarked No. 3 Squadron NH90 to contribute to Operation Pacific Relief in Tonga. 'A' Flight integrates the versatility and capability of both HMNZS CANTERBURY and NH90 helicopters, allowing both units to work in concert.

'A' Flight is a relatively new concept for the RNZN and RNZAF. Around half are sailors of various trades and the other half are No. 6 Squadron maintainers as an interim to the third flight commitment the Squadron has to the RNZN Fleet alongside 'B' and 'C' Flights.

'A' Flight operates with fewer aircrew and does not fly or maintain an aircraft; this is conducted by the Flight it works alongside, be it 'B', 'C' or a NH90 detachment. 'A' Flight is designed to do exactly what it did in Tonga.

In order to operate safely on the Flight Deck of a Ship, 'A' Flight personnel conducted Flight Deck Party training at RNZAF Auckland in October 2021 which ranged from chaining and approaching running aircraft safely, through to connecting and disconnecting underslung loads from helicopters. At the Damage Control School at HMNZS PHILOMEL, firefighting skills were honed to allow 'A' Flight personnel to assist in generic fire incidents through to aviation Damage Control and fuel spills on the Flight Deck.

The next task was meeting HMNZS CANTERBURY once she returned from Singapore and undertaking a Safety And Readiness Check (SARC) period in harbour and at sea. This was a culmination of the learning undertaken in an ever-realistic and dynamic scenario while supporting a real aircraft and evolutions required. As a result 'A' Flight facilitates a key aviation capability to support the current type of operations and regularly exceeded expectations.

This is expected to continue until it is fully complemented with the usual makeup of aircrew, No. 6 Squadron maintainers and Seasprite aircraft and becomes a traditional Flight in due course.

Outside of direct support to Tonga, 'A' Flight has enabled deck landing, winch and vertical replenishment (load lifting) training for the No. 3 Squadron aircrew aboard and flying an injured shipmate back to Auckland for treatment from about 500kms north east of Cape Reinga. All this has been done while maintaining strict COVID-19 protocols including regular PCR and RAT testing to protect the people of Tonga that interacted with the ship and aircraft.

While the NH90 (or visiting Seasprite) operates off HMNZS CANTERBURY, 'A' Flight is there co-ordinating briefings, configuring the Flight Deck and adjacent areas for aviation operations, readying fuel hoses to keep the aircraft flying and maintaining vigilance with patience should an unlikely emergency situation occur.



## On call for 'A' Flight duties

ASCS

### Dion 'Aho

Ever since joining the Navy, getting to go to sea was always something I looked forward to. The excitement of being able to sail on a Navy ship sounds pretty cool. Since basic training, nothing was certain with COVID around but now that I'm at sea, the uncertainty isn't there. Being a Seamanship Combat Specialist (SCS) at sea is very full on, from waking up at different times of the day and night for Bridge Watches, to Specials, Boat Drills and LCMs; no wonder why we are the "Pride of the Fleet". All these things come together to make sure the ship operates at her highest capacity.

To me, being chosen to train for Flight Deck Crew was a bit out of the blue as I had not heard of any SCS rating working with the Air Force team. However, it was also exciting due to the fact that I knew that I'll have the best of both worlds, working with ships and helicopters. I personally think it's pretty cool. We're a group of Air Force and Navy personnel working together as a team to ensure that the helicopter lands on and takes off from the flight deck safely. In other words, there won't be any chopper on-board this ship without the 'A- Team'.

Never did I ever think that my first port in my Naval career would be Tonga. As a Tongan, it gives me the pride and joy to be back but this time on a Royal New Zealand Navy Ship. Being out on the Flight Deck ensuring the No. 3 Squadron NH90 gets the task done or just seeing the ship providing very much-needed water to Tongans gives me great happiness that somehow I am contributing to this task, even though it may seem insignificant to the eyes of others.

# FROM SCHOOL TOUR TO FRIGATE COMMAND

When Commander Kane Sutherland was 11 years old his entire class crafted letters to the Navy, requesting a tour of Devonport Naval Base. His was considered the best, and it did the trick. As well as the tour, he got a gift pack, and it all came to mind when people asked him what he was going to do when he left Campion College, Gisborne.



This year, on 2 February, he received his promotion to Commander and took command of frigate HMNZS TE KAHA, stating "I have the ship" to the outgoing Commanding Officer, Commander Brock Symmons. The ceremony, just over 20 years to the day since he joined, was held at the Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

"I still have that gift pack," he told *Navy Today*. "That and the tour was in the back of my head for years. When a recruiter came to school, I sat in. I formally applied in my final year."

Four years after joining, CDR Sutherland finished as one of the top students on his Bridge Warfare Officer course. He then posted to HMCS REGINA, based out of Esquimalt in Canada for 14 months. He has served in HMNZS TE MANA in the Arabian Gulf and South East Asia and has been throughout the Pacific to the Southern Ocean as an Operations Officer/Navigating Officer in HMNZS OTAGO.

His first commands were Inshore Patrol Vessels HMNZ Ships PUKAKI and ROTOITI from 2011 and he remembers those commands fondly. "A young Lieutenant, with 30-odd Ship's Company. We went to Fiordland and it was too deep to anchor. So in a small cove, we put berthing lines across to some really big trees and stayed there for the weekend. We were on a 12-day patrol and we needed to save enough fuel to finish the operation. It was great, being so far away from anywhere, tucked into a cove. I'll always remember that."

As a Lieutenant he embarked in the Singaporean Landing Ship Tank RSS ENDURANCE as the Assistant Task Group Operations Officer, conducting anti-piracy operations off Somalia for several months.

CDR Sutherland has been the Operations Officer in HMNZS CANTERBURY during her disaster relief mission following Cyclone Winston, then Operations Officer in TE KAHA during the Kaikoura earthquake relief operation.

As Executive Officer in TE MANA, he helped deliver her to Esquimalt, Canada for her Frigate Systems Upgrade. He then shifted across as TE KAHA's Executive Officer for the latter part of the same refit. "It was really good having those friends I had made as a sub lieutenant. And I knew how the Canadians worked." He carried on with TE KAHA for a South East Asia operation last year, working with HMNZS AOTEAROA and the navies of the Five Powers Defence Arrangement at Exercise Bersama Gold in Singapore.

He says it's the variety of the work that gives the 'buzz' to the job. "South East Asia, meeting up with aircraft carriers, other navies, and there's the countries you visit and the things you get to do. And it's the people, this great bunch of people you have working for us. There's a common purpose. You spend a lot of time on ships, living close together. You trust your workmates. You have their backs and they have yours. That's the way I like it."

# Defence Adviser in Fiji



Commander

**Sarah Bamfield**

## In our series on our Naval personnel in diplomatic posts, we meet Commander Sarah Bamfield, Defence Adviser in Fiji.

Commander Sarah Bamfield received the warmest of welcomes as New Zealand's first female Defence Adviser to Fiji. But tinged with that has been the realities of COVID-19, with an outbreak of the Delta variant two months after she arrived.

In 2019 she had been eyeing up a Pacific role and had thought the Fiji posting had closed. So it was with surprise and delight when she was confirmed for the three-year role. "The world looked very different back then," she says. Her husband's two children are seniors in high school in New Zealand, and they had planned to see them every school holidays. They were also expecting an endless stream of family and friends visiting them in Fiji.

But none of that has been possible. "Yet," she says. "That has been the toughest part of the job from a personal perspective, as we haven't been able to see them for so long due to COVID-related travel and MIQ restrictions."

CDR Bamfield is part of a team of four. "There's three Technical Advisors (Warrant Officers) – Navy, Army, and Air Force. The latter is in a Leadership & Mentoring role and is responsible for delivering the Veiliutaki Framework, which is a leadership model based on the NZDF Leadership Development Programme but designed to be fit-for-purpose for a Fijian context."

As Defence Adviser, she is the main conduit for everything defence-related between New Zealand and Fiji.

"Most of my time is spent liaising between the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing; and HQ NZDF and the New Zealand Ministry of Defence on bilateral and some multilateral defence engagement initiatives. I also act as an advisor to the New Zealand High Commissioner and the wider NZ Inc staff based here in Suva on defence-related matters and protocols."

She was surprised by the extent of official international engagement and representational duties. "Fiji is a real hub of the Pacific, and a huge number of countries and international organisations have their embassies, high commissions and regional offices based in Suva. So although Suva isn't considered a 'major Post' like Washington DC or London, it resembles a similar tempo."

Her Fijian colleagues are wonderful to work with. "Anyone who has Fijian friends or has worked with the RFMF before know that Fijians are an amazing bunch of eternally happy people, always laughing and singing! I think one of the more significant points of difference between our two defence forces, is the strict adherence to long-standing military tradition and protocol. Both are paramount in Fiji, and while we in the NZDF do observe certain traditions and protocols in a ceremonial setting, we're a little more relaxed when it comes to general engagement day-to-day."

She says she has enjoyed learning about Fijian culture and society. "Fiji is both fascinating and complex, by way of its layers of history, demographics and traditions. I don't think I will ever truly understand the inner workings of Fiji's society, but it's certainly interesting trying to figure it all out!"

The impact of COVID on Fiji has been tragic and her biggest challenge professionally. "A couple of months after I arrived, there was an outbreak of the COVID Delta variant in Fiji with a high number of COVID-related deaths and an already fragile health system under an unprecedented amount of pressure. The health and welfare of our NZDF staff and families was my absolute priority, and I don't think I truly realised just how much that responsibility weighed on my shoulders until the six-month lockdown eased and we started to come out the other side."

It also meant finding new ways to engage. "We've created a social media presence and the team has been really adaptive in the ways in which they've helped to raise the profile of the NZDF despite the challenges. Nonetheless, we're all looking forward to resuming a more steady-state of defence engagement and mutual exchange between NZ and Fiji in the near future."

She is also the Defence Adviser for Kiribati and Tuvalu. Travel hasn't been possible yet, but she wants to make sure her introductions are conducted in person, in respect of their cultures.

Despite COVID, it's pretty good living on a tropical island. "What's not to like about that? Now that domestic COVID restrictions have eased, we're really lucky to be able to explore the other islands and the local resorts. I've only been across to Vanua Levu (second largest island) so far, but I'm hoping to explore further afield in due course."

# Busy Times For Warfare Officer



Lieutenant  
**Tayla Cox**

For a warfare officer, life can be pretty intense. That's when Lieutenant Tayla Cox steps back and takes a moment to appreciate how cool her job is.

LT Cox grew up in Thames and six months from finishing high school, she had no idea what she wanted to do. "I didn't want to go to university, I didn't want an office job. I was quite an outgoing kid. I wanted to travel, do something different each day, and I wanted a challenge." A friend had joined the Royal New Zealand Navy the previous year and recommended it. "So I joined at 17 as a warfare officer."

Her work has certainly ticked the travel box. In 2017 she posted to tanker HMNZS ENDEAVOUR, travelling around Australia and South East Asia – coincidentally with her friend who recommended the Navy to her. "That was a highlight, being age

19 and navigating the ship by myself somewhere in the middle of the South China Sea." More recently she has been posted to HMNZS WELLINGTON as a watchkeeper for a Western Pacific fisheries patrol and would have deployed with WELLINGTON to the Solomon Islands during the civil unrest, but for coursework. "I was really excited because this kind of operation was the reason I joined the Navy, to go and help and make a difference."

As a bridge watchkeeper, the most challenging aspect is dealing and controlling multiple factors, both internally and externally to the ship. "That could be taking charge of other ships, manoeuvring around them and then we may have to launch the sea boat or aircraft while keeping the ship navigationally safe from land or other shipping. Another challenging aspect is the lack of sleep. We generally work 16-hour days and only get 5-6hr sleep and this routine can be for weeks, so I get pretty exhausted."

The people are a big highlight of being in the Navy. "I've met some of my best friends in the Navy. Also, because you have to live and work with people while on board ship, you form tight relationships."

LT Cox loves exercise, although finding time can be hard. "There are gyms on board ship and usually PT sessions twice a day. I'm a passionate runner – marathons and ultra-marathons – and the command team are supportive of my training. The ship is very good at balancing work and morale, organising activities while we're at sea."

LT Cox is now finishing the coursework she couldn't miss – her Bridge Warfare course. "That's the last course needed to become a fully qualified bridge watchkeeper in any environment. It's essentially being able to navigate, control and operate a ship in peace or a wartime situation. After this, I can go on to become a navigator, then eventually Principal Warfare Officer and one day Executive Officer or Commanding Officer of a ship."

She would suggest that some extra maturity could help in the job. "I found it quite hard taking charge of people who could be 30 years older than me at times. Perhaps taking six months to get some life experience first might have been good, but I have still done quite well. Not many people can say that they drive a multi-million dollar ship while operating aircraft and sea boats and being paid to travel."

*LT Tayla Cox, pictured as a SLT aboard HMNZS WELLINGTON during fisheries patrols last year.*

# Back-To-Back Maintainer

When *Navy Today* last met Shotaro Hashimoto, he was an Able Marine Technician (Electrical) visiting Japanese destroyer JS TAKANAMI to help with a gift exchange translation.



That was during the International Naval Review in Auckland in 2016, and it's an event that still stands out as a highlight for him. He came to New Zealand from Japan in 2003 and joined the Royal New Zealand Navy 10 years later. Being on board a Japanese ship was like going back to Japan, he said.

Today he's a Leading Hand, promoted last year, and Electrical Maintainer aboard HMNZS WELLINGTON. Offshore Patrol Vessels have busy lives, and WELLINGTON's was especially in the second half of last year, with a fisheries patrol in the Pacific followed by a sharp turn-around deployment to the Solomon Islands in response to the civil unrest.

He can spend a lot of his time at sea fault-finding and carrying out rectifications, although the downside is that at sea, resources are limited.



Leading Marine Technician (Electrical)

## Shotaro Hashimoto

But the two postings were great for his experience, he says. "Although, the Solomon Islands was one of the few places the Royal New Zealand Navy and my ancestors fought [in World War 2] so it felt weird thinking about it."

Downtime on WELLINGTON often involved playing horror video games against his crewmates, courtesy of a Playstation brought aboard by a colleague. Back on land a particular hobby of his is First Person View (FPV) drone flying, where participants control drones equipped with cameras while wearing head-mounted displays showing the live stream camera feed from the drones. "It's a lot more nimble compared to smart drones. It's getting popular as a new way of filming action shots."

Coming up is a distance learning course and a short block course in Hamilton. "The Navy is very supportive if you're wanting to learn more."

His advice to someone contemplating an engineering career is to consider the NZDF. "It is a good place to start your engineering career especially if you are not sure what type of engineering field you would want to go for."





# OUR PEOPLE

1. Lee Blackburn is promoted to Commander, with his wife Emma and Chief of Navy RADM David Proctor handling the rank slide change.

2. AVM Andrew Clark, Chief of Air Force, presents LTCDR David Roderick, XO of No. 6 Squadron with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots (Including Navigators) Sword for Operational Excellence. It is the first time it has been awarded to a Naval Aviator (as the award was specifically for RNZAF Pilots or Navigators).

3. Promotion of LTCDR Beth Lee to Commander, with husband CDR Matthew Lee and sons Sebastian (green) and Arthur (pink).

4. CDR Brad King, Senior National Officer OP PUKEKO, CMF Chief Plans; WGCDR Karina Chipman, RNZAF (CMF Chief - Air Coordination Element) and LT Sean Kerwick, RNZN (CMF Battle Watch Officer) with the Combined Maritime Forces, Bahrain.

5. MID Brooke Williams, JOCT 22/01, shows the focus during the Longest Day at Tamaki Leadership Centre.

6. Karl Woodhead is promoted to Commodore, with his wife Nikki Payne and Chief of Defence Force AM Kevin Short changing the rank slides.

7. AET Phebe Taylor at work in HMNZS AOTEAROA during her mission to Antarctica.

8. Regional Naval Officer for Hawkes Bay, LTCDR Paul Eady, gives an address during an Art Deco Festival function in Napier.

9. On the bridge of HMNZS AOTEAROA, CDR Dave Barr, XO and CAPT Simon Griffiths, CO, consult with ice pilot Captain Evan Solly.

10. Midshipmen from JOCT 22/01 intake work through the longest day at Tamaki Leadership Centre, Whangaparaoa. From left, MIDs Robert Eivers, Lewis Pangalila and Liam Wenger.

11. HMNZS AOTEAROA personnel show their support for International Women's Day as the ship approaches Ross Island.

12. CDR Vicki Stevens with her two sons, Laurie (left) and Mitch, during her promotion at the Navy Museum.

13. Tomasi Jackson is promoted to Petty Officer Weapon Technician on board HMNZS AOTEAROA in McMurdo Sound.

# SAILOR'S INPUT TO UNITED NATIONS COMMAND



When Warrant Officer Cryptologic Technician Chris McKeich spotted a brand-new Cabinet-approved posting at United Nations Command in South Korea, he thought he'd be up against stiff competition.

"To be honest, it came as a bit of shock when I got it." He's New Zealand's Senior Non-Commissioned Officer at UNC Headquarters. He's been there four months out of six; his successor will do a 12-month posting. "I've worked in multi-national environments before so I was naturally interested in it, but I didn't get my hopes too high."

United Nations Command, established in 1950, is based at Camp Humphreys, a United States garrison of around 30,000 personnel south of Seoul. It is comprised of military personnel from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States. Its basic

objective is enforcing the terms of the Armistice Agreement between North and South Korea.

WOCT McKeich reports to a United States Army Colonel and acts as a Senior Enlisted Adviser to a Major General. He represents the voice, culture and concerns of the enlisted personnel to Command, and brings the perspective of the enlisted personnel to support the mission of UNC. He also ensures his boss learns as many Kiwi colloquialisms as he can.

"I take every opportunity to add value and identify areas where we can support the UNC position from a Senior NCO perspective," he says.

It means representing the UNC at multinational meetings and events. "One of my fondest memories to date was being asked to join ten United States E9s [the highest enlisted US rank] at a Keystone learning event at the Korean Combat Training Centre (KCTC). We formed a panel that was attended by a few hundred Junior NCOs and was live-streamed across several South Korean military bases. What struck me the most was, as we got off the bus, I was literally mobbed. It was the first time they had seen, let alone interacted with a New Zealand Senior NCO."

A month later, among E9s from the United States and Korea, he was asked to deliver a presentation on the UNC's past, present and priorities for the year, in front of General Paul LaCamera, Commander of UNC.

He's now in a routine with the KCTC events happening twice a month, where he and other E9s continue the learning events for Korean E9s and junior NCOs. He's also helped develop a mentorship programme, been a panel member on quarterly awards, organised ceremonial events and helped to develop policy.

"Naturally it hasn't been all work. Before the weather got to the point where it is at now (-12 this morning) I got up to Camp BONIFAS and managed to get a few golf shots away on the 'world's most dangerous golf hole'." He's describing a 192-yard par-3 fairway 500 yards south of the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea. A sliced shot could end up in a minefield.

"To say the first four months have flown by would be an understatement. Even though we haven't been able to see as much of South Korea as we would have liked due to COVID, the work has been fantastic and extremely rewarding. The Kiwi contingent are a great bunch and are representing and flying the New Zealand flag in their various positions across the organisation with pride and professionalism."

His final thought is to the 'home front' – his wife Kimberly, and the 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary they can't be together for. "See you soon!"

# On Spiritual Service

When a Navy ship undertakes an ashes scattering at sea, the solemn duty requires the placing and lifting of tapu, to transition a ship into a vessel undertaking a spiritual purpose.

So it was with the committal of WOWEA Colin Edward 'Obs' O'Brien (27 February 1953 – 1 January 2021) to the waters off Great Barrier Island from HMNZS AOTEAROA, on her return journey from Antarctica.

WOWEA O'Brien's final role, in his 50-year career in the Navy as a sailor and civilian, was as warden of the Navy's field station on Great Barrier Island, and it was his family's wish that his ashes be committed to the sea nearby.

"Bless this ship that we set apart for a holy purpose, to commit the ashes of our loved ones to the deep, and to commend them to your eternal care," said Commander Dave Barr, Executive Officer of AOTEAROA. The ship had turned into the wind and slowed, her ensign visible at half-mast to the assembled Ship's Company on the flight deck. The sky was cloudless as CDR Barr delivered the divine service, prepared for him by Navy Chaplain Lloyd Salmon.



*"I runga i te Ingoa o te Matua, O te Tama, o te Wairua Tapu, Amine."*

In death, Colin had quite a journey to this point, joining HMNZS AOTEAROA for her Antarctica mission which included his ashes setting foot at Scott Base. But it was only a tiny fraction of the miles covered since joining the Navy in 1970, with service aboard HMNZ Ships OTAGO, TARANAKI, WAIKATO, and CANTERBURY and roles including Weapons Electrical Warrant Officer and Ships Diver. Colin was also Ship Manager for many years for HMNZS ENDEAVOUR, AOTEAROA's predecessor, and it was fitting his final journey was on board the replenishment vessel. While in OTAGO, he witnessed the French nuclear explosions at Mururoa. Outside of the Navy, he was a born adventurer, exploring South East Asia, Africa, Russia and China.

Standing at the quarterdeck, Chief Petty Officer Seaman Combat Specialist Taff Morris, AOTEAROA's Chief Bosun's Mate, committed the ashes to the sea.



With a final blessing to lift the imposed tapu, AOTEAROA would revert from a funeral vessel to being "the best ship in the RNZN", said CDR Barr.

"May the peace of God our Creator rest upon this ship, and upon all who sail in her. May they go out and come in, and find safety, knowing that in storm and in calm, they are in your hands."

WOWEA O'Brien's family were later presented with a framed nautical chart showing the Ship's position at Great Barrier Island.

# *On tour with the royals*

*When Leading Mechanical Engineer Richard John Batten sailed for Britain in Dido-class cruiser HMNZS BELLONA in 1955, he was just part of a crew that was going bring back cruiser HMNZS ROYALIST. Instead, he ended up on a world cruise in the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA. He talks to Navy Today about his adventures.*



*LME John Batten in Royal Yacht uniform.*

John Batten has finished mowing his lawns and is happy to chat to the editor down the phone about his time in HMY BRITANNIA. Now 85, he handles eight acres, including three planted in avocado, at his home outside Tauranga. "I was lucky to go on that trip, and I've been very lucky in life," he says. Originally from the small mining community of Glen Massey, near Ngāruawāhia, he wanted to be a butcher but got beaten to the apprentice job by a boy who left school before him. "So it was either the Navy or the coal mines." Both his father and sister had been in the Navy.

In December 1955 LME Batten and the crew of BELLONA were in Plymouth, working on the modernisation and refit of ROYALIST, which would then be exchanged for BELLONA on indefinite loan to New Zealand.

By July 1956 ROYALIST was commissioned and on her way, stopping first at Gibraltar. John was on watch in the refrigeration space when he saw a pair of legs coming down the ladder – a Chief Petty Officer. "The Command has sent me to ask, if you would like to return to England to join the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA."

John had never heard of the ship. "I clearly remember saying, 'what is that?'" He and one other RNZN seaman, Able Seaman Bob Soper, were placed on board HMS BIRMINGHAM on her way to Portsmouth. The pair then got measured up and issued with their Royal Yacht uniforms and kit. "It was an unusual sailor's uniform. A serge material top that tucked into doe-skin trousers, that had a silk ribbon bow stitched on the waistband at the back." The cap tally, labelled 'Royal Yacht', had a crown on it and a number of special badges on their uniforms were embroidered in silver.

HMY BRITANNIA, commissioned in 1954, embarked on a 182-day Commonwealth Tour across 1956 and 1957, 120 nights at sea, circumnavigating the globe and crossing the Equator three times, visiting 38 ports in 21 different countries. On board, at different times, were Princess Margaret, then HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, with visits to Australia and New Zealand, and finally the Queen in a state visit to Portugal. The Duke of Edinburgh four-month stint has been popularised in Season 2 of the fictional TV series *The Crown*, which suggests the tour was a globe-trotting jolly during which the Duke may have strayed.

## JOHN BATTEN

*Right: Vice Admiral Sir Conolly Abel Smith with Princess Margaret aboard HMY BRITANNIA.*

*Below: HMY BRITANNIA at Antarctica.*

In his personal notes John describes it as “two hundred Englishmen, four Australians and two New Zealanders in a \$4m, 412-foot ship, steaming 31,430 miles, two months in the tropics and three weeks in Antarctic waters”. His understanding is the Australians were flown in from Australia to complete the crew’s Commonwealth representation, although he notes there were no South African sailors aboard. He remembers the “sleek, shiny, hand-polished ship” slipping her berth at 1630 on 28 August 1956, leaving behind Portsmouth and local headlines that read, ‘Is the Royal Rock and Roll Yacht Safe?’, implying the yacht was not sufficiently seaworthy. “We, as a crew, were confident, and many adventures lay before us,” he wrote.

The first tour (22 September to 6 October), with Princess Margaret, mostly involved Africa. The Princess enjoyed the various shows put on by the ship’s concert party, and John, with his guitar, was often asked to entertain with New Zealand songs. He saw the Princess quite often and he says she was very approachable and friendly.



## JOHN BATTEN



*Clockwise: The Duke of Edinburgh in his office aboard HMV BRITANNIA.*

*The Duke in the mess deck with the crew during Christmas.*

*Princess Margaret.*

"I used to do a lot of rock and roll singing, and Princess Margaret loved music. When I saw her on the upper deck, she wanted to chat. It was general conversation, about where I was from. She was very, very nice, very attractive, and easy to talk to."

Protocol was relaxed, he says. "We weren't told anything [about protocol]. We were introduced to the Queen. You just talked to them as if you were talking to one of the officers. We were like a family on board. They knew we were Royal New Zealand Navy."

It was easier duty than ROYALIST. "You always walked around with a rag in your overall pocket. If you saw a mark on the paintwork, you automatically wiped it off."

John and members of the crew got time ashore to explore, and enjoyed the prestige of being from the Royal Yacht. "They put on lots of things for us, but you had to be very careful. People wanted to buy you drinks, they would ply you with alcohol." John wasn't a drinker, but he remembers some crew over-indulging.

"In Mombasa [Kenya] 16 of us went inland by bus, past tribes and people who lived in mud huts and still hunted for food as the Māori did 120 years ago. Tired, covered in dust and grime, we arrived at the lodge in a plateau below Mt Kilimanjaro. Each morning we arose early to see lions, zebras, wildebeest and every other variety of East African beast and bird in its natural way of life."

He remembers a two-day "jam" session in a remote New Guinea village. "The natives wore huge head-dresses made from flowers and bird of paradise feathers; their faces caked in clay and painted with bizarre war paint, tattooed bodies and an assortment of bare bottoms."

The second tour, from 16 October 1956 to 6 February 1957, involved the Duke of Edinburgh, who opened the Melbourne Olympic Games on 22 November. His tour of New Zealand saw him arriving by air at Ohakea on 11 December 1956, travelling to Wellington. After brief visits to Rotorua, Wairakei, Kawerau, and other places of interest in that area, he went to Auckland and on to Norfolk Island, staying 15-16 December before flying to Christchurch to rejoin the Royal Yacht, which was refuelling in Lyttelton. "My parents drove down and came on board for some photos," says John.

"In the Chatham Islands we were entertained at a race meeting with local horses and jockeys. The first day out from Chatham we crossed the International Date Line and had our second 19<sup>th</sup> December. We were in the roaring forties, our course taking us to the east and slightly south into the roaring fifties. We prepared for mountainous seas, heaving decks and driving rain and down in the engine room I stood handy to a bucket. But to everyone's relief our full securing of the ship was not necessary."

## JOHN BATTEN



Whaling station at Gough Island, South Atlantic Ocean.

He says the Duke of Edinburgh spent quite a bit of time in the engine room, enjoying a cup of soup with the engineers, and John saw a lot of him. "This was something we did in the Royal New Zealand Navy. You would go up to the galley at night and pinch some vegetables. Down in the engine room, we'd have a big pot with a steam jet going through it, and we would make soup for the night shift. The Duke would often come down for a cup of soup."

BRITANNIA crossed the Antarctic Circle on New Year's Day, making the Duke the first Royal to cross the Circle. "That was the day of my 20th birthday," says John. "The Navy creates many adventures, regardless of age and time in the service." According to John, the two women aboard became the first British women to cross as well. To commemorate the event the Duke, and onboard artist Edward Seago, created a linotype mold to ink certificates for the personnel on board – who were now entitled to join 'the Order of the Red Nose'. "Then they threw the mold overboard, so there would be no more copies of it."

The ship proceeded to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, and took part in a whale chase with whalers. "Believe me, those men earn their money, as life is often risked to bring home the kill." The collective vessels stalked and harpooned a 70-ton baleen whale. "Even the Duke was quite enthusiastic about the whaling."

These hunting expeditions, unpalatable by today's standards, would have been unremarkable in the fifties. They included a crocodile hunt on the Gambia River in West Africa, with two crocodiles shot.

BRITANNIA headed home via Gibraltar and Portugal, arriving back in Portsmouth on 24 February 1957.

LME Batten transferred to HMNZS MAORI, the Royal New Zealand Navy Headquarters at New Zealand House in London, and was told to get his English driver's licence. "I became a chauffeur for a Captain Brian Turner, driving a black Humber Super Snipe around parts of England on a recruiting campaign for the RNZN."

LME Batten and AS Soper eventually flew back to New Zealand on an RNZAF Hastings transport over eight days in May 1957, via Malta, Persia (Iran), Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Singapore and Australia. Media were keen for their story on arrival at Whenuapai, making note of their "jumpers inside trousers" (*Waikato Times*). John still has the unique uniform in his wardrobe, plus a lot of souvenirs from the trip.

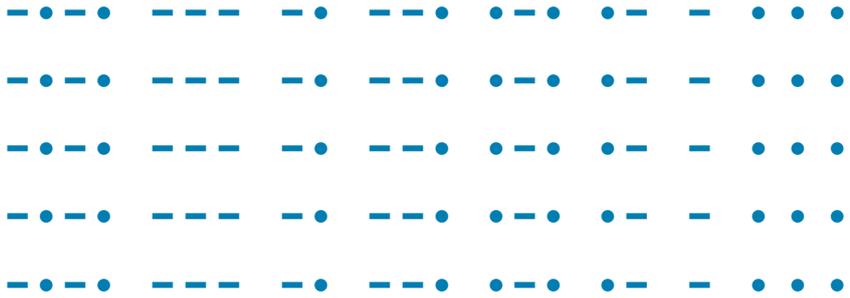
"So ended a chapter of our lives which we will never forget. We had looked into the lives of many people all over the world, and in doing so, we returned to our homes richer for the experience." The advice of the Duke of Edinburgh, "not to bore your friends and relations with deep sea stories of your adventures", was likely disregarded.



As well as John Batten's recollections and notes, many details in this article are taken from a 2006 summary prepared by Kath Burns, a relation of John Batten, using the official book of the voyage, presented to each member of the crew. John's copy is Number 314 out of 350.

BRITANNIA decommissioned in 1997 and is now a museum ship in Edinburgh, open to the public.

# ON COURSE WITH MORSE



## Leading Communication Warfare Specialist Sam Hardy

In a cheerful moment on board HMNZS WELLINGTON, Able Communication Warfare Specialist Sam Hardy receives the flashed message “Congratulations on your promotion” during a Morse code signalling session on the flight deck.

Her promotion to Leading Hand followed, but the exercise demonstrates that Morse code remains an essential part of Communication Warfare branch training.

*Left: Morse code is useful for replenishment at sea manoeuvres. In this image USS HOWARD undertakes a replenishment at sea with HMNZS AOTEAROA (November 2021).*

*Above: ACWS Sam Hardy with her deciphered message on her promotion.*



## Chief Petty Officer Jon Dagger Senior Communication Warfare Specialist Instructor

We still teach Morse code to all CWS ratings. We utilise Morse code in the visual medium, using flashing light to transmit and receive messages and tactical codes.

It typically takes around 20 hours (20 individual lessons) to teach the individual characters A, B, C, D, and 1, 2, 3, along with punctuation and special character , . ( ) to a trainee.

There's another 20 hours to teach them the procedures for transmitting and receiving messages. Just like with radio/voice comms, you have a set format to use. For example, using the word Say Again to ask for a repetition, Roger, to say you understand, and Out to end a transmission.

We still employ and train in Morse because it's a communication tool when ships go 'emission silent'. When that happens, all transmitters such as radars, radio, and satellite communications – basically anything that can be tracked or intercepted – are switched off, for warfighting reasons. You can use Morse signals between ships you are in company with, to pass on messages, manoeuvring details, pass on enemy positions and tracking information.

We generally go silent when we conduct Replenishment at Sea (RAS), such as HMNZS AOTEAROA supplying fuel to HMNZS TE KAHA. They could be alongside each other for over an hour taking on fuel and supplies. Two ships running alongside, with limited room to manoeuvre, becomes an easy target.

# Masters of shipping

If you needed subject matter experts about merchant shipping in New Zealand, you'd do well to turn to the New Zealand Company of Master Mariners.



Established in 1928 and formally incorporated in 1933, the Society is a professional body aimed at promoting professional standards, education and training within the maritime industry. With a membership of just under 200, the Company consists of qualified merchant navy officers – primarily those holding Master Mariner qualifications (now termed “STCW II/2”).

But there's a Royal New Zealand Navy element as well, with officers who have passed Ship Command examinations and have had the command of a major fleet unit eligible to join. The Master of the Company is Captain Eric Good (RNZN Retired) and the General Secretary is Commander Larry Robbins (RNZN Retired).

It's this breadth of experience, says CAPT Good, that ensures the Company is well suited to provide corporate expertise and knowledge to government agencies in formal maritime enquiries.

For example, it could be a shipping enquiry, like the collision between container vessel SYDNEY EXPRESS and fishing trawler MARIA LUISA at the Wellington Heads in 1999. “There's some complex rules of the sea involved, so we helped to clarify the rules. Some of our members were Cook Strait ferry masters, people who had been at sea for a long, long time. We give expert advice on technical matters; we don't get involved in union arguments.”



There's a social element to the Company. There are four branches in New Zealand – Wellington, Auckland, Tauranga and Christchurch. The members meet once a month – in Wellington it's at the Bolton Hotel.

“At Company meetings, there is naturally a degree of ‘lamp swinging’ as members catch up with former shipmates and seafaring colleagues but there is usually a serious side to meetings, with a speaker on a professional or allied topic,” says CAPT Good. “The Company's relationship with the RNZN has not always been close, but today is at a very warm level and speakers are often drawn from serving naval officers. Each year (in ‘normal’ non-COVID times) the Company joins with other Maritime Associations for a pre-Christmas dinner in Auckland, which is run along naval mess-dinner lines and well-attended by serving officers of the RNZN and RNZNVR.

The Company is affiliated to the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, a livery company in London. Livery companies evolved from London's medieval guilds and were responsible for training and regulation of their respective crafts, trades and professions. Their headquarters is in the former HMS WELLINGTON, moored alongside the Thames Embankment. The vessel has a New Zealand connection, being assigned to New Zealand waters by the Admiralty in 1935.

“It's a pretty big collection of people and we want to grow it more,” says CAPT Good. “New members are always welcome.”

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**For more information see**  
[www.mastermariners.org.nz](http://www.mastermariners.org.nz)

*HQS WELLINGTON, the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners in London.*

*Photo: J P Lon / Wikimedia*



# THE SCOTT BASE EXPERIENCE

■ By LMED Max Neustroski

Working down in Antarctica for the 2019/2020 summer season as part of OP ANTARCTICA would undoubtedly have to have been one of the best experiences of my naval career so far – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined I would get the chance to return, but in early October 2021 I received a call that saw me deployed back to the ice for OP ANT 21/22, and my second Antarctic summer as a communications operator at Scott Base.

The communicator role at Scott Base is a 24/7 job, although I guess the night shifts aren't really night shifts when you have 24-hour daylight, as is the case during the Antarctic summer months. The on-call communicator is a tri-service role (shared between four NZDF staff) whose primary role is communication between the Base and scientists working out in the field (some of whom are at camps for upwards of two months), helo and fixed-wing air operations, and staff working off-base. For example, each science team will have a scheduled daily call and this is when important messages can be passed on, along with weather and news updates, resupply orders, and even a cheeky joke or riddle for a bit of light-hearted entertainment. For me, it means I get to interact with a lot of different people working in the most remote areas of the world, which makes the work very interesting and enjoyable.

Despite this being my second trip to the deep South, this season has already provided me with so many new experiences. The Sea Ice (ocean that has frozen over during the winter

months) has been much thicker this year compared to last season, which has allowed us to travel via Hagglands to both Cape Royds and Cape Evans and visit the historic huts built by the crews of Captain Scott and Shackleton during the early 1900s. With COVID on the cards this time round, the pre-deployment isolation in Christchurch provided me with ample opportunity to learn about these heroic explorers and the significance of their expeditions, including their triumphs and defeats. Having this newfound knowledge made venturing into the huts all the more meaningful, and I felt like I was able to get a real appreciation for how equally difficult and exciting their experiences must have been. At Cape Royds there is also a small Adelie penguin colony that can be viewed from a distance and whose shenanigans are always a treat to see.

As the temperatures increase throughout the summer season (from -20 to -30 in September to -10 to 0 degrees in December) and the conditions of the Sea Ice change, trips to the historic huts and over the pressure ridges to watch the seals dwindle. But as one door closes, another opens, and the warmer temperatures have brought more epic experiences, such as shredding the slopes on Kiwi Ski Hill, climbing Castle Rock, crevasse tours and ski-doo rides. One of my highlights of the season so far has been getting a helicopter ride into the McMurdo Dry Valleys to assist in the moving of scientists from one valley into another – the views were unreal! I also got to go down the Ob Tube for the first time,



a 5-ish metre test tube fitted into the ice that one person at a time can climb down into to get a full 360-degree view of what lies beneath the ice – in my case, jellyfish and scientific divers, and the distant murmurings of seals.

In addition to the pre-deployment isolation requirements, COVID-19 has changed the way many things operate in Antarctica, including how Scott Base and McMurdo Station (USA) can interact with one another. For example, after a flight lands in Antarctica, both bases must isolate for a minimum of seven days which, this year, has caused interruptions to annual events such as the Thanksgiving 5km Turkey Trot and the Hut Point 10km, as well as many of the regular social activities such as weekly indoor football, volleyball, and basketball. Luckily, breaks in the flight schedule earlier in the season allowed for some events to occur, including the high-stakes 5km (hu)Man-haul race (teams of 5 consisting of 4 runners plus 1 on a sled) and Scott Base vs McMurdo Tug-of-War. While the COVID restrictions unfortunately also meant we couldn't spend Christmas with McMurdo, there were still plenty of celebrations to be had, with the opening of homemade Secret Santa gifts and the arrival of fresh fruit and vegetables for Christmas Dinner, as well as some fresh new powder on Kiwi Ski Hill. While I am thoroughly enjoying my time here down on the ice, as the season draws closer to an end I am beginning to look forward to some warmer weather and spending quality time with family and friends back home.



## SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT FOR HIGH ACHIEVING CADET

A Nelson-based Sea Cadet says her Chief of Navy scholarship will definitely make a difference as she departs the province for university studies.

Petty Officer Cadet Jess Verkuil, 18, from TS TALISMAN, was awarded the \$5,000 scholarship at a unit ceremony recently. The prize is awarded annually to a serving Sea Cadet to support them in their first year of tertiary study. It goes to a cadet who embodies the Navy's Core Values by demonstrating their commitment to the Sea Cadet Corps as an integral and valued part of the RNZN Family.

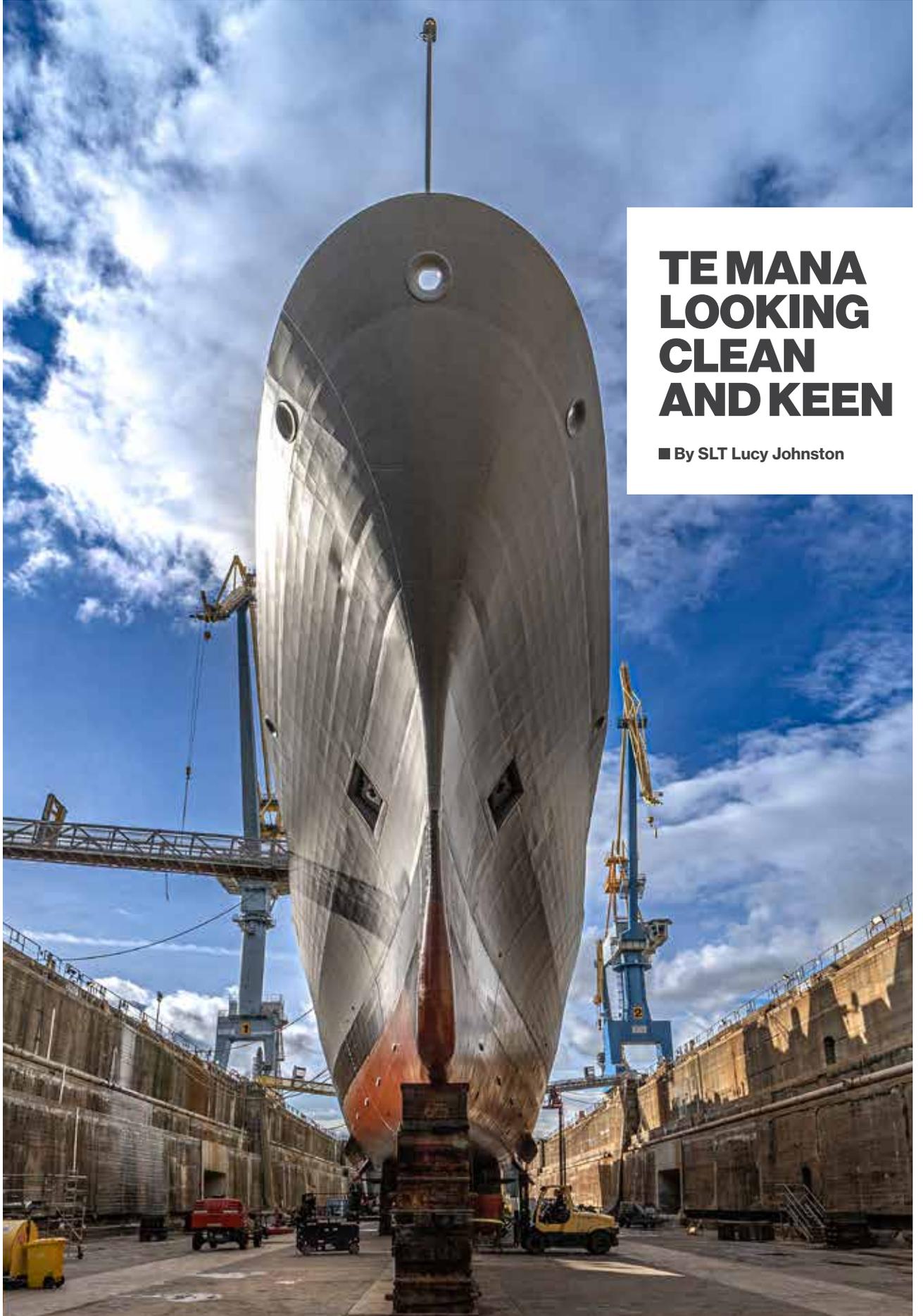
Speaking to *Navy Today* just before heading to Dunedin, POCDT Verkuil says she was very thankful to get the scholarship. She is about to start her first year in Health Science at Otago University, and is eyeing up medical school for the future.

She followed her sister – who has since joined the Navy – into Cadet Forces. “She came home from cadet nights with fun stories, so I wanted to be involved.”

Now in for five years, she says she likes the fun, opportunities and getting involved. “I was quite shy when I joined. Cadets have taught me commitment and courage to step outside my comfort zone. It has also given me leadership abilities and a general interest to get involved and give things a go, taking on leadership positions when presented. I look at challenges with confidence and a problem-solving attitude. It's also taught me there is always a group of people that can help me when I can't do something by myself.”

Scholarship applicants need to meet a set of criteria to apply. Their study must meet pre-defined criteria, and their applications are put forward to a selection panel consisting of the Chief of Navy, the President of the Sea Cadet Association of NZ, the Commandant of the New Zealand Cadet Forces and the Director of Coordination (Navy).

*POCDT Jess Verkuil receives her Chief of Navy scholarship. Pictured with her parents Julia and Martin Verkuil at TS TALISMAN.*



# TE MANA LOOKING CLEAN AND KEEN

■ By SLT Lucy Johnston



*Left: HMNZS TE MANA enters drydock, showing the wear of her older paintwork.*

*Below: HMNZS TE MANA with her new hull paint above and below, refreshing the anti-fouling and anti-corrosion capability of the hull. The white objects bolted to the hull are the sacrificial zinc anodes, to help minimise the electrolytic corrosion on the hull and other key underwater components.*



## There's light at the end of the tunnel for HMNZS TE MANA's Frigate Systems Upgrade.

Over the Christmas break our sailors and families got the chance to make the most of an amazing winter in Canada, with plenty of snow and Canadian festivities. On return from the snowy holiday, the working year for HMNZS TE MANA's Ship's Company quickly built momentum. A large portion of her Ship's Company packed up their family rental houses and said goodbye to their families who departed Canada over January and February.

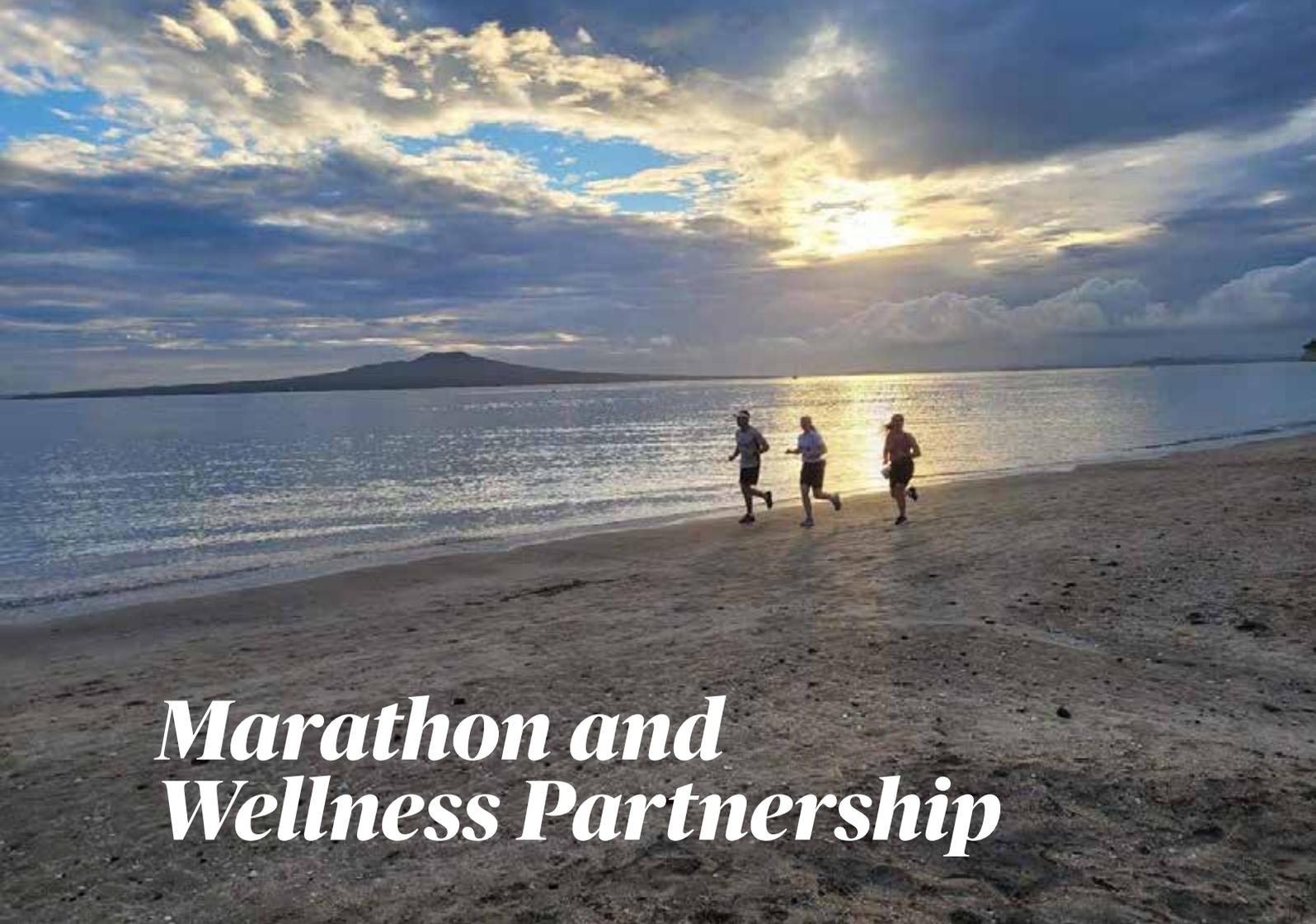
Ship's Company dived straight into preparations towards a six-week period of maintenance. The maintenance period commenced on 2 February with a short yet intensive dry docking in which her Ship's Company worked tirelessly to support Lockheed Martin Canada and Victoria Shipyard contractors, while also working through their own long lists of maintenance tasks. The maintenance conducted during the dry docking ranged from replacement of smaller machinery components,

cleaning of tanks and testing of equipment, to applying a fresh underwater coating and the fitting of shiny new propellers. This period was a major supporting component to ensure TE MANA's operational and availability requirements will be met through to her next extensive maintenance period.

TE MANA will be undergoing Harbour Training, and Harbour Acceptance Trials (HATs) in March. Harbour Training will focus primarily on regeneration of a complete duty watch and her ship's sea-going capabilities, with HATs culminating in a full power trial of the propulsion system. On successful completion of HATs, TE MANA will commence Sea Acceptance Trials (SATs). SATs will provide the ship and her Ship's Company with opportunities for training in core mariner skills, damage control incident response, and trade-specific skills, plus provide Command with assurance that all key maintenance conducted during the

maintenance period and drydocking was completed correctly. After her sea trials, the ship will continue to operate in and around the areas of Esquimalt, the Juan de Fuca Strait, and the Canadian west-coast firing areas, in order to facilitate the final stages of the FSU project.

As TE MANA's Ship's Company near their final days in Canada, Command is extremely proud of the work they have done towards FSU and the sacrifices they have made along the way. It has been a long awaited return to New Zealand, and we are looking forward to being home for a spot of respite prior to undertaking the next step in her capability release.



# Marathon and Wellness Partnership

The organisers of the Navy's annual Half Marathon event have teamed up with charity Te Kiwi Māia to raise money for the charity's cause.

The Navy's half-marathon is not run in the classic sense. Runners choose their own route and run 21.1 km in one shot, or submit times from a number of runs over a week that total 21.1 km. In pre-COVID times the half-marathon was often timed with a public half-marathon event, if runners wanted to race in a formal setting.

Half Marathon organiser Lieutenant Commander Scott McGregor, knowing Te Kiwi Māia's aim to support first responders and NZDF personnel with their physical and mental health, reached out and suggested a partnership.

"As TKM has been created to support NZDF and first responders, it was a perfect collaboration to showcase NZDF personnel supporting their own by donating to a charity which gives back to them, their colleagues and their families," he says.

COVID restrictions meant it couldn't be a group event, and all donations to the cause were made via online transfers. But there was some socially-distanced encouragement as runners spotted friends.

Lieutenant Megan Mashali and Able Musician Rebecca Nelson, founders of Te Kiwi Māia, passed LTCDR McGregor on Takapuna Beach, as they tackled the run on the first day of the designated week.

The event raised \$908 from entry fees and donations, plus \$1,050 from motivated Army Officer Cadet Kume Papuni-Tuhaka. He pledged that for every \$100 he raised, he would run a half marathon. It meant he ran 10 half marathons in just over five days, running 65km in one morning on his final day.

The funds will go towards TKM's first wellness week in May which will see 12 first responders and NZDF personnel taken away for a week of respite, recovery and rehabilitation. The charity is working towards creating a facility of their own for these retreats.

The next Navy half marathon event runs from 31 August to 7 September.

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**If you would like to donate to Te Kiwi Māia, you can do so at: [givealittle.co.nz/org/te-kiwi-maia-1](https://givealittle.co.nz/org/te-kiwi-maia-1)**

# BIG TIME UCKERS

It isn't enough, it seems, to be the largest ship in the fleet. HMNZS AOTEAROA now has the largest uckers board. Able Seaman Combat Specialist Luke Finnigan made the uckers board from scratch with a view to re-creating a World War 2 Royal Navy image, of sailors from HMS CARDIFF enjoying a Sunday afternoon of uckers on deck. Uckers is a more complex version of the dice game Ludo and popular with the armed forces – particularly Navy.

*From left, LCH Conor Monaghan, AMED Matthew Good, ASCS Luke Finnigan, ACH Melissa Kurylo, LET Nathan Thompson, CPOCS Taff Morris, LET Jason Young and AET Akkharadet Nahai. The photo was taken last year during AOTEAROA's South East Asia deployment.*

*Photo credit: Military Images / Alamy Stock Photo*



# 15 ROUNDS

## WITH COMMANDER TREVOR LESLIE



01

**Job title and description:**  
Deputy Director (Maritime)  
Littoral Warfare

02

**Date joined RNZN:**  
May 1986

03

**First ship posted to:**  
HMNZS CANTERBURY (L421)

04

**Best deployment:**  
Too many to list, however a few stick out:  
**1993 MAN** deployment to Sub-Antarctic as a LDR was a wildlife boys-own adventure from diving with whales and seals, to culling wild goats and capturing French blue rabbits and southern spider crabs for DOC research.

**2007 OP LIMA** – UN Explosive Remnants of War Disposal in Southern Lebanon following the war between Israel and Hezbollah; and the numerous WWII Explosive Remnants of War disposal deployments to South West Pacific, where you get to dive on WWII Japanese and US planes lost at sea, old ships stacked with ordnance onboard and walk the hills with locals discovering caches of munitions and WWII equipment left in the ocean and jungles – they all remain real highlights.

05

**Hometown:**  
Te Kuiti

06

**High school:**  
Te Awamutu College

07

**Favourite book:**  
*Freedom at Midnight* about the split of India and Pakistan. My most recent read was a book called *Step into the Spotlight* by Russell Pickering, an insightful and well-written book about communication, presenting and persuasive skills.

08

**Favourite movie:**  
I have a heap of kids so any movie my wife and I get to watch in silence, and to the end is my favourite.

09

**Favourite album:**  
Tough question as have a wide variety of music taste, old school rock in Meatloaf, Van Halen and Journey through to John Legend, Van Morrison and more modern and local music including LAB, Six60 and Corella.

10

**Favourite song:**  
Last month it was *Alpha Blondy* – *Wish you were here*.

11

**Favourite holiday destination:**  
Marokopa, New Zealand.

12

**Outside of work, what's a couple of things you enjoy doing:**  
Fishing, diving and hanging with the whanau.

13

**What's something about you that not many people know?**  
I am currently listed in the Malaysian Guinness Book of Records!

14

**A valuable life/Navv lesson for me is?**  
Work hard, have fun, love what you do and don't hesitate when you should act.

15

**How would you describe the Navy in 10 words or less:**  
An opportunity to do extraordinary things with extraordinary people.

*Navy Today* would like to congratulate CDR Leslie, who was recently awarded the Defence Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of his achievements as Littoral Warfare Capability Manager and Head of the Diving Trade.

