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NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSN INC

BOX 33 710, TAKAPUNA, AUCKLAND 9

NEWSLETTER No 61

March 1989

A registered publication

SUBSCRIPTIONS: If you have recently paid your sub we say thank you, and please ignore this paragraph.

If you have not we would appreciate payment at the earliest to the address given above. To be financial to 31 Dec 89 you owe us S.....

LAST POST: 34843 E.A. (Allan) Kempthorne, 6 Feb 89, at Dunedin.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS: Capt G.W. Blandford to 8 Birkley Rd, Bayswater, Auckland 9.

R.G. Blankley MBE to Holland Rd, RD4, Hamilton.

WO2 I.S. Foster to 16 Fd Regt RNZA, Papakura (from 8 May 89).

W.F. Giles to 2 Denmark St, Dannevirke.

Lt Col B.J.L. Hewitt to 9 Marrakai St, Hawker, ACT 2614, Australia.

W.N. McLeod to 342A Royal Rd, Massey, Auckland 8.

Lt Col T. O'Reilly to 7 Pinelands Ave, Seatoun, Wellington.

Col F. Rennie CBE MC to 228 Northbridge, Akoranga Dr, Northcote, Auckland 9.

Col R.H. Smith OBE to 2 Clensmore Pl, Torbay, Auckland 10.

J.J. Sprangers to 33 Beeston Cres, Manurewa.

GONE NO ADDRESS:

PREVIOUS ADDRESS

Bdr P. Brooke-Anderson

Box 12136, Wellington.

Sgt C. Haerewa

10 Ballance Rd, Waiouru.

D. Morgan

26 Pitoetoe Rd, Paraparaumu.

MAJOR D.H. Rollo MBE

317A Kapiti Rd, "

Lt Col A.D. Ross

Fort Dorset.

F.W. Wood

81 Tuarangi Rd, Grey Lynn, Ak 2.

NEW MEMBERS: 1849 G. (George) Henry MBE, 19 Talbot St, Wanganui.

L32302 Major W. (Wally) Fraser MBE, 5 Pimble Ave, Karori, Wellington.
(Associate Member).

AMENDMENT TO NEWSLETTER No 60: Add to apologies for absence from the AGM: J.F. Frame. We regret the omission.

REUNIONS: 3 Fd Regt RNZA reunion will be held over Queen's Birthday week-end 1990 on the occasion of the Regiment's 50th anniversary. Members interested including RF Cadre Staff should write to: 3 Field Regiment RNZA Reunion, Box 2411, Christchurch, or contact Secretary, NZPFOCA for pre-registration form.

4 Field Regiment NZA reunion will be held at Wellington on 29-30 Sep and 1 Oct 89. Contact Secretary, Box 5076, Wellington

KOREA Veterans reunion Queen's Birthday week-end 1990 at Wellington. Contact Ian Mackley, 8 Pinny Ave, Lower Hutt.

FIFTY YEARS ON growing older and older. 12 July 1988 marked the 50th anniversary of the day when 18 Wing RNZA marched into Trentham. We should have mentioned this fact earlier - but of course we are getting older too. Members are urged to remind Secretary of similar anniversaries etc.

AUCKLAND GUNNERS DAY SOCIAL/LUNCHEON: This function will be held on Wednesday 24 May 89 at the Birkenhead RSA, War Memorial Park, Recreation Drive, Auckland 10, commencing 1100 hrs. Members wishing to attend please contact Alf Smith on 09/410 4564 by 17 May. To get there, if travelling north from the City take the Northcote exit from the motorway (the first over the bridge), go to the top of Onewa Rd, turn right at the roundabout into Birkenhead Ave, then left into Recreation Drive, just short of the traffic lights. Those travelling south on the motorway take the Northcote Rd exit, keep straight on through Northcote Rd/Ocean View Rd/Pupuke Rd, turn left into Birkenhead Ave, then right into Recreation Drive.
NB: We know Gunners' Day falls on 26 May, but on the Wednesday (24th) there are fewer people in the RSA than on the Friday, making things more convenient both for ourselves and the caterer.

HEADQUARTERS NZPFOCA: We have moved our Headquarters from Takapuna RSA to Birkenhead RSA. Briefly the reason is we are getting a significantly better deal from the latter organisation. We still have a 'Cordite Corner' session every Friday morning at 1100 hrs. If you are in Auckland take a run out to Birkenhead and join us.

WELFARE: From time to time members suffer ill health or other misfortune, including admission to hospital, without their District Reps being informed. In such cases the Reps are unable to fulfill the terms of Rule 3 which covers the visiting of sick Comrades and/or the provision of assistance to those in need, or to arrange other members to do so.

Therefore, in order to ensure all members OR THEIR NEXT-OF-KIN can contact their District Reps, details of the latter are given below:

Northland: W.N. (Bill) Stephenson, 08 933/799.

Auckland/North Shore: A.J. (Alf) Smith, 09/410 4564.

South Auckland: T. (Terry) Hughes, 09/267 5305.

Papakura/16 Fd: W02 L.G. (Les) Jackson, 09/299 9370 Ext 718.

Thames/Coromandel: I.A. (Ian) Rowntree, 0816/58475.

Hawke Bay/Bay of Plenty: Capt J.G. (Jim) Gilberd, 070/437926.

Waiouru: To be appointed.

Taranaki: Capt G.E. (George) Sutherland, 067/85533.

Wellington: Capt A.J. (Jack) Baigent MBE, 04/85493.

Nelson/Westland/Canterbury: C.C. (Colin) Young, 03/898 006.

Burnham/3 Fd Regt: W01 P.B. (Paul) O'Connor, 03/256801.

Otago: G.A. (George) Stuart, 024/894651.

Southland: G.L. (Gordon) Williams, 021/69 911.

SHOW THIS LIST TO YOUR NEXT-OF-KIN

District Reps please notify Secretary of any changes to above.

NEWS FROM AROUND AND ABOUT: Ian (Slim) Cunningham is in his last year with the Inland Revenue Dept, Dunedin.

A.T. (Hobby) Hobson writes from Te Aroha that all's well in that part of Godzone.

NEWS FROM AROUND AND ABOUT (Cont.): The February 89 issue of Readers Digest featured a very interesting article entitled 'New Zealand's Queen of Sail,' referring to the 33-metre sail training ship Spirit of Adventure. Thumb-nail sketches of members of the part-time crew included one on the ship's cook '... a retired soldier in his seventies...' affectionately called 'Old Charlie' whose naturally buoyant spirits are dampened only by foreign hands in his galley. 'Old Charlie' is of course our long-standing member Charlie Anniss from Whitianga. Great stuff, Charlie - but I did not know you were that old! Sec.

Rex Hudson reports from Christchurch that he retires at the end of July and hopes to visit Auckland - provided he gets past the immigration control at the foot of the Bombay Hills! But don't come to Takapuna RSA, Rex. We now patronise Birkenhead.

Russell de la Cour attended the Duntroon Graduation, and at the same time a reunion of his class, in December 1988. Fifty years had elapsed since his class graduated, and all those alive and able to travel attended. The class assembled in 1935 with 20 members of whom 15 graduated, but eight only attended the reunion, one other member still alive being in Wellington Hospital. He found it very interesting meeting old class-mates again, and the trip well worthwhile.

He recalls the 1936 Class also graduated in 1938 after having their course shortened by twelve months to three years. They too were having a reunion, but no New Zealand members were present.

Peter Joplin reports that the Bay of Plenty in general and Whakatane in particular continue to flourish.

Jim and Dot Gilberd accompanied by daughter Glenise recently returned from ten days at Norfolk Island which he highly recommends as a stress-free locale among delightful people. While waiting for the outward flight on 18 Feb Jim attended a meeting of our Executive, while the ladies made other arrangements.

Bill Weatherhead from Christchurch is fairly actively engaged with a Veterans' Golf Association, but is not playing at the present time having just had his left knee joint replaced. He recalls that it is forty-nine years since he marched in to Trentham with 30 Wing RNZA. He says, "Tell Allan Boyd his old football club is on the mend and last year had their best season for years, and this year can do even better."

We much regret to have to record the deaths of Mesdames Doris McIver, Lillian Stuart, and Vicky Smith since publication of our last newsletter. We extend our deepest sympathy to their life-long partners Bruce, George, and Alf.

We extend a welcome to our two new members (see page 1): George Henry joined the RNZA in 1939, served in the Pacific, Italy, and Japan after which he was stationed at Fort Dorset, Napier, Palmerston North and Wanganui, retiring in 1965. He then spent 15 years with the Maori and Island Affairs Dept in Wanganui. George plays golf, indoor and outdoor bowls, and in his spare (!) time looks after the Wanganui Division of the NZ Neurological Foundation.

Wally Fraser joined the RNZASC (FIF) in 1947, served in Korea, and

held various appointments in Linton, Waiouru, Gisborne, Trentham and Defence HQ, being commissioned in 1966. He retired in 1983, and is currently a member of the NZ Army Association committee. Wally has completed a history of Fort Ballance, Wellington, and has initiated a move to have the fort restored and preserved as an historic site. He would appreciate any further information on Fort Ballance which members may have available.

SOLDIERS' NAVY

By W.L.R.

As promised in Newsletter No 60 the following article is a brief history of New Zealand defence vessels and the part played in their operation by soldiers since the formation of the N.Z. Permanent Force in 1885/86.

After the 1878 episode historians call 'the first Russian scare' fear of attacks on ports by Russian warships then in the Pacific prompted the Government to do something about coast defence, then virtually non-existent. To obtain expert advice on the situation the Defence Department commissioned Colonel P.H. Scratchley CMG, Royal Engineers.

In his report to Parliament dated 1 March 1880 the Colonel made a number of recommendations on the siting and equipping of coast artillery batteries - with guns purchased in 1878 but still lying in store!

To support the guns he advised the Government to obtain 12 spar torpedo boats, three for each of the four main ports. Because the surveying and preparation of sites including the building of concrete emplacements for the guns would take many months he further strongly advised the torpedo boats be bought immediately - as they could be put into service without delay.

For the next two years the report lay 'under consideration' - politicians' jargon for doing nothing about it. In the meantime more efficient boats had been put into production, but as might have been expected the price rose accordingly. So putting parsimony before expert advice, the politicians reduced the number to four, i.e. one for each main port.

Towards the end of 1884 the boats arrived in New Zealand as deck cargo on two merchant vessels. Numbered 168-171 by the makers, they were named respectively Tamioha (Lyttelton), Taiaroa (Port Chalmers), Arai-te-Uru (Auckland), and Jervois (Wellington), but officially were designated solely by their numbers.

By mid-1885 they had been delivered to their home ports, had been fully assembled, and had successfully undergone trials under the supervision of Government or Harbour Board master mariners and marine engineers. The Officers Commanding the New Zealand Permanent Artillery at each port then assumed responsibility for them.

Construction of boat-sheds and other necessary buildings commenced as follows:

AUCKLAND: The torpedo boat (No 171) was at first housed in a shed on the Royal Naval Reserve (now Windsor Park, Devonport), but later a shed was erected at North Head in the area most of our members will remember as the Artillery Yard, now part of HMNZS Tamaki

training establishment. Here the Depot was also situated; it included barracks, stores, offices, magazines, test equipment, and apparatus (air compressor etc) for charging Whitehead torpedoes (see below). The jetty there is still known as 'Torpedo Wharf.'

WELLINGTON: A shed at Mahanga Bay housed the boat (No 170), just north of Point Gordon, where there was a guncotton store and test equipment. The Depot with facilities similar to those at North Head was at Shelly Bay in the area now occupied by the RNZAF. Here also was a jetty, and married men living in Wellington were transported to and from the Depot by Defence Department steam launch. Contrary to accounts printed elsewhere the NZ Permanent Force pioneered the Shelly Bay station. Other services please note.

LYTTELTON: The shed for boat No 168 was in the small bay just west of Point Erskine. The Depot with facilities similar to those at North Head was situated in the enclosure of Fort Jervois, Ripa Island, where there was also a jetty. In 1893 the barracks at Jervois were occupied by convicts employed on the defence works. Where the Permanent Force men lived is not recorded in references available to the writer.

PORT CHALMERS: The torpedo boat (No 167) lay at moorings off the Depot and jetty which were situated at Deborah Bay, east of Port Chalmers. There was neither boat nor slipway, Isbister's Slip at Carey's Bay being used when necessary. At Deborah Bay facilities similar to those at the other stations were provided.

Records indicate no torpedoes of any kind were ever held at either Lyttelton or Port Chalmers. Although Whitehead torpedo dropping gear was held at both Depots neither boat was ever fitted with it. Similarly, although torpedo charging apparatus was held at both Depots it was never set up for use. Thus no torpedo training could be carried out.

Despite repeated calls by Officers reporting the state of the defences to Parliament that the Lyttelton and Port Chalmers installations be made fully operational little was done in this direction. There appeared to exist in defence circles during the later years of the 19th century that Auckland and Wellington were the only ports really worth defending, and at one time Defence actually stated they could not afford to pay for defences in the South as well as in the North Island. What the Mainlanders thought of this is not recorded.

The name 'Arai-te-Uru' given to the Auckland boat was suggested by the renowned Maori Chief Rewi Maniapoto, 'arai' meaning a screen or defence, and 'uru' a wind from the sea, the two together denoting a defence against any enemy. In legend Arai-te-Uru was a taniwha which defended the waters of the Waitemata.

Built by Messrs J.I. Thorneycroft & Co of Chiswick, London, the boats' dimensions etc were as follows:

Length	63 ft (19.2m)	Beam	7ft 6 ins (2.29m)
Depth	4 ft (1.22 m)	Draught	3ft 4 ins (102 cm)
Displacement	12 tons (12.22 tonnes)	Speed	17.5 knots
Propulsion	Single screw 2ft 10ins (86 cm) diameter.		

The hulls were constructed of 3/32-in (2.38mm) galvanised iron. At the stern was a small cabin for the coxswain, while immediately forward was the wheel-house. An oval-shaped conning-tower, the top of which was fitted to take a twin-barreled 1-in (25mm) calibre

Nordenfelt machine-gun, was situated aft of the engine-room. As a further economy measure the Government provided one gun only, which was fitted to the Wellington boat and used for training. Thus in action the other three boats would have been defenceless. The weapon may be seen in the Queen Elizabeth II Army Memorial Museum, Waiouru, mounted on its original conning-tower.

The vessels were coal-burning, steam being generated in a locomotive-type boiler. Each was powered by a compound reciprocating engine, the high-pressure cylinder having a bore of 8.25 ins (210mm), and the LP cylinder 13.5 ins (343 mm). Stroke was 8 ins (203 mm), steam pressure (max) 130 lbs per square inch (896 kPa), and the engine developed 170 indicated horsepower (127 kW) at 630 revs per minute. The engines were of advanced design for the times, and were said to have been beautifully made. A lone survivor may be seen at the Engineering School, University of Canterbury.

With three tons of coal (the maximum which could be carried), the boats could steam for 24 hours at 10 knots.

When first received in New Zealand the armament consisted of the spar torpedo. Now a century ago the terms 'torpedo' and 'mine' could mean the same thing; they were often used to describe what we would today define as a mine. Thus the spar torpedo consisted of an iron drum approximately 12 inches (305 mm) in diameter and 24 ins long (610 mm) filled with 35 lbs (15.88 kg) of guncotton. It was attached to a 34 ft (10.36m) steel spar mounted on the forward deck. This spar could be run out and depressed until the charge was immersed from eight to ten feet (2.43-3.05m) below the surface of the water, and about 20 ft (6.1 m) ahead of the boat. The object was to detonate the charge of guncotton against the side of an enemy vessel below the waterline.

On going into action the torpedo boat approached the target at speed, slowed to about three knots on closing it, then lowered the spar. When the 'torpedo' touched the ship's side one of the crew detonated the charge electrically.

The idea was to attack during the hours of darkness as a daylight attack would have been suicidal. Colonel Scratchley in his report described this mode of attack as '... a service of great danger...' but was quite satisfied '... there would be no difficulty in obtaining volunteers for the purpose.' His reason for recommending three boats per port was to permit an attack from three directions at once, thus increasing the chances of success.

Naturally during an attack the spar would be destroyed; indeed there was also a distinct possibility of the boat itself suffering damage. Strange as it may seem, for these reasons the boats never underwent trials with the spar torpedo. To his surprise (so he said), the Minister of Defence was informed by the British authorities that as there was a risk of damage to the boats they had forbidden any trials, '... which, if anything had gone wrong would have been at New Zealand's expense!'

The spar torpedo was old in 1885. During the American civil war a steam pinnace fitted with a spar torpedo attacked the Confederate vessel Albemarle. Both pinnace and target sank together, and of the pinnace crew but one man survived.

Our grandfathers were fortunate that the torpedo boats were never used in anger, for they were the nearest thing to a 'kamikaze' weapon ever issued to New Zealand soldiers!

To be continued.