

## Once was a boy (the germination of a Communicator) update June 2020.

### Seaman Boys at Motuihe Island by Michael Catlow NZ15983.

I decided to write some Naval memories down while I still have some recall of events and to add to my family & RNZNCA Comms history that I once actually existed. I have partly sanitised this version and omitted much Naval language and some events, which probably made it less humorous than I would have liked but PC is alive and well and some woofers may complain. This is an ongoing project where some memories, finally recalled, may need to be added to this memoir, it is a living document. It must be said that these are my own personal experiences and I have laid out this story using title headings, so I do not wander too much from the subject in hand in my dotage. Titled information may need accuracy corrections before final completion to my family history archive. I am happy for anyone to help amend any lapses of memory on my recollections of uniforms etc. & personnel in photographs – the memory can do strange things over time as one ages – especially with names. Unfortunately, a lot of photos are posted on social media etc. with no or minimum names of the participants so it just becomes a photo of ‘a bunch of sailors’ which makes it less interesting. It is also written in the hope that it inspires others to write their stories of their time at Tamaki before we all kark and then the history is lost. It is a shame we did not have digital photography or scanners in my day.

### Entry to RNZN.

I had just left school at Hamilton Boys High School 4<sup>th</sup> form class 4E (Mr. DeBlois) an engineering class. I was a bit of a confused adolescent & a real handful at this time of my life and not much interested in engineering/science/math's. My best class school friend at the time was expelled but I was deemed to be under his influence too much, so could stay on to complete 4<sup>th</sup> form. My highlight of the week was wagging school on Friday afternoons to go to the movies. The school also had Cadet training. We were all dressed up as mini soldiers in our brownish-yellow serge uniform which I found hairy, itchy & uncomfortable. We had to march around & try to learn basic marching & handling guns. There also existed the ATC but this was thought to be for kids who wanted a more refined pursuit. There was much peer & teacher pressure to be an Army cadet. This was considered great by the school to instill discipline towards the teachers. I also suspect it could have engendered a desire to join the Army by some pupils, especially bullying types.

Prior to leaving school I had attended a Navy recruitment session in Paeroa a year beforehand, while briefly at Te Aroha High School. It was considered I did not have enough schooling behind me so had to wait a bit longer. I informed the recruiter that I wanted to be a Communicator but from my IQ test results they wanted me to be an accountant (no way - Communicator please), and so it was written on the application. The Naval recruiter was not fully convinced I was suitable, he wrote ‘This boy is immature & talks too much but may be worth a bet’ (charming).

I had as a young boy marveled at how people were able to contact each other around the world and there was so much technology being discussed with the coming space exploration and the proposed use of satellites etc. that I had read about in futuristic comics. To listen to the radio at night I had made a crystal radio set (with headphones) so I got to hear all the news and of course the music hit parade each week. I did not get much sleep before I had to be up in the morning to bike to school about 7km. I have a passion for pop/rock music which is still as strong today and I get so much pleasure from listening to all the music that I grew up with (I haven't taken to rap at all although it's the modern ‘in thing’).

After school wound up and I was awaiting my call up, over the school holidays I got a job at the Tip Top factory in Hamilton, on the ice cream ‘Topsy’ making. You put a metal cover with a multitude of holes over the wooden sticks in a holding tray then clamping it, so all the sticks were held tightly. This metal tray was then placed over a large mould when the ice cream had been poured into it and clamped tight. Then the whole lot was then put into a freezing brine bath & after a while, when frozen, you unclipped the top lid and pulled out the sticks which held an ice cream. The ice

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creams were dipped into a chocolate bath and hey presto, still popular Tip Top chocolate covered Topsy ice creams, but what a laborious process it was in those days. We also had frozen cray fish which we could buy cheaply so that went down well with the family. Working meant I could have a wee bit of cash in my Post Office account to use when I joined the Navy.

I finally received a letter from RNZN saying my application to join was confirmed and gave me the joining details required in Auckland plus the Train journey travel documents. I travelled up to Auckland from Hamilton on the express train on a Sunday. I spent the night at the Peoples Palace Hotel in upper Queen Street. I walked down into Auckland central that evening and saw the movie 'Battle of the River Plate' so I felt really primed up for the next day. Our minds were very impressionable at that young school age of fifteen.

On the Monday morning I walked down to Admiralty steps to be taken with other new recruits over to the Naval base. HMNZS Philomel (a rock frigate) is the main navy base in Devonport where personnel lived while awaiting drafts or training of some kind and where all the ships were berthed. We had to attend RNZNH (hospital) for a medical & dental check to make sure there was nothing wrong medically to affect our enlistment. After these checks I joined the other recruits at the 'Green Hut' to formally sign on the dotted line our acceptance of service & be issued with our service number ID. I don't recall reading the contract details, Tom & I signed anyway. I joined the RNZN on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1957 as a seaman boy 2<sup>nd</sup> class (as did all 'Boys'). Our engagement was for 8 years but this only started once we attained the age of 18 as I was informed later. After the completion of signing up we were escorted & marched (shuffled) to the dining room for refreshments, undergoing much ribbing from the uniformed personnel

### Uniform Issue.

After enjoying quick refreshments in the dining area, we were escorted to the Stores Department and issued with our new training uniform clothing and accessories.

No.8's Blue working dress. These were everyday working gear which was a blue shirt and dark navy-blue cotton/denim pants which were (I thought) quite stylish so was happy with them. This was worn with socks and boots during our training

No.3's -Uniform Navy-Blue serge bell bottoms These were for use after work/evening dress. Quite unpopular with some as they were a very 'hairy' itchy wool serge. We wore the leather black slippers or boots with this in the evening. Once red branch badges were issued later these were sewn on to this uniform. We also wore a navy-blue square neck wool under jersey with this uniform for colder nights.

Later, as 1st class boys we got No.1 uniform, this was a finer wool serge bell-bottom navy-blue uniform for wearing ashore & Divisions on Fridays where you looked your smartest for inspection. This was worn with a blue-jean collar, folded silk tie & white lanyard. Gold braid badges were also issued for my Wireless Telegraphy (W/T) badge and bugle badge (which was worn on the right forearm). Shoulder flashes New Zealand. For the bell-bottom trousers I ironed 5 spaced creases in them to make them 'tiddly' (some preferred 7 creases).

We also had underwear, socks - short and long (black/navy), PT gear – 1 white (for PT) & 1 blue (for sport) cotton long sleeve shirt and white shorts with white sandshoes, white sailor hat with a black headband with gold woven lettering HMNZS Tamaki, Navy blue Burberry raincoat, leather slippers (black ones with a buckle, (ok by me although hated by some), black laced boots for parade training & day work wear.

A navy-blue 'housewife' kit for mending your gear with white & navy-blue cotton & wool, small scissors, needles for repairing uniform damage & darning holes in socks, this was rolled up and secured with a navy-blue tie strip.

A wooden name stamp made up of individual letters of your name which was used to dip into a black paint mixture to stamp your name on all your articles of kit. We also had a small leather attaché case. A seaman's knife (pussers dirk) was also issued which was worn around the waist

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attached to a white rope lanyard. A Manual of Seamanship volume 1 B.R.67(1/51) reprinted in 1954 for all things nautical was issued for required reading which I still have to this day for some obscure reason & one of the few naval items not burgled from my house in later years...

A hammock – 2 canvas square with brass eyelets, a mattress, pillow & pillowcase and 2 sheets plus 2 wool blankets for colder weather. Rope clews and ropes for hammock support.

It was quite exciting trying everything on and leaving our civvies behind. All the clothing kit was stowed in a large tan coloured canvas round laced top (drawstring) kit bag which you slung over your shoulders to carry. Your name & number was stenciled on the bottom of the kit bag, which was rope ringed on the edge, I guess for longer wearing of the base part.

### Training camp HMNZS Tamaki.

We were transferred to HMNZS Tamaki (another rock frigate) on Motuihe Island via a Fairmile transport launch, a workhorse of the RNZN which transported personnel and supplies to the island from HMNZS Philomel, the trip took about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour or so. Motuihe Island had a colourful history which I will not go into here as the history is available on the internet but briefly it served originally as a quarantine station, a children's health camp and during WW1 used to inter POWs. Later the island obtained approval to be used as a naval training establishment for sailors to train for WW2 so extra buildings were constructed and the camp gradually took place. It was apparently commissioned as HMS Tamaki on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1941 but renamed HMNZS Tamaki in October of that year on formation officially of the RNZN. Coincidentally I was born in the same year so the RNZN & I are of the same birth year so it's easy to remember which is RNZN anniversary. The motto was Ake Ake Kia Kaha, coincidentally the same motto of Te Awamutu College of which school I attended in Form 1&2.

On the launch I got chatting again (as you do) with Tom Dowling & found we had some things in common. We are still friends to this day and regularly catch up when possible. Tom became a seaman RP & later a PTI, we also served together on HMNZS Pukaki on a 12-month FESR commission and on HMNZS Taranaki for the maiden voyage from UK to NZ. This was common in the Navy where you meet and make friends during your service. Of course, there are some people you do not get along with but that is normal too, also, some started out as 'pricks' and remained so in my eyes but perceptions can be coloured by personal events. It is great when you attend reunions and catch up with friends from navy days and see what life has had in store for them when their service life has ended. The variety of occupations they ventured into are quite amazing. But I digress.

The HMNZS Tamaki camp was up a long uphill tar sealed road lined with trees at the North end of the island. The camp consisted of a multitude of long mostly rectangular wooden buildings to sustain a training establishment. As we came into the camp the existing personnel (old boys) all came out for a gawk at the 'new boys' and make profane comments on what was in store for us, some of us wondered what we had let ourselves in for. But of course, this was only the 'rite of passage' that all new boys, I guess, were greeted with in a time honoured display of 'greetings' on entering the camp.

### Accommodation.

Our first task was to be taken to our first accommodation in Drake 2 dormitory beside the Regulating office. It was a long rectangular wooden building. Inside it had plain polished wood-planked floors with rows of wooden lockers down each side with one each allotted to us for storing our kit. Having this dormitory presented huge problems by being next door to the Regulating office, you were visible all the time and easy to be overheard while chatting or skylarking. You were constantly on your toes trying to be as invisible as possible especially at night to avoid the wrath for e.g. of RPO George Findlay.

We just put our kit bags adjacent to our allotted locker and went to the dining area for a meal (scuran) and drink of tea/coffee. The dining hall area was plain with long wooden tables covered

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with a washable 'plasticity' canvas cloth. Seating was long wooden benches, not comfortable as you were required to 'eat it and beat it' as everything was done by times and just enough time was given to eat without prolonging the event. The food was good though and we appreciated the time out, I considered the food supplied at the camp was of a good quality but of course most teenagers are always hungry, and I never turned anything down & also ate extra things others would dislike 'I'll have that if you don't want it'.. After our meal we went back to the dorm and stowed all our gear from our kitbags into our lockers.

Then we had the fun of getting our hammocks put up for sleep that night (getting into your 'pit'). We had no idea of what to do but luckily some help was at hand to assemble the hammocks and 'launch' them. A hammock consisted of a soft canvas type square with a series of brass eyelets at each end, which you learned to string each eyelet with clew ropes which were about 4mm wide which connected to a steel ring. This ring connected with a sturdier rope approx. 25mm or so width which was used to fasten to a hook on the wall at each end which to raise the hammock to about neck height. Bedding for the hammock consisted of a mattress filled with I think a horsehair so it could be washable, a sheet (doubled over for maximum use) and a blanket for warmth if required. Hammocks were a reasonably comfortable form of sleeping arrangement (when aboard ships it moved with the motion of the ship, so you slept reasonably well). A wooden 'stretcher' bar could also be used on ships by some crew to spread out the end of the hammock sheet to give more room for your pillow. Getting in & out was a hilarious scene to behold but by practice you soon learned to swing in from a round metal bar without too much interference with the other person on either side. Old boys seemed to think it was funny to upend the hammock of a new boy, it is a wonder serious injury was avoided. After lights out on our first night we heard for the first time the immortal words 'Shit in it new boys' With the menacing tone it was given we interpreted it to mean we should be quiet or else.

Each morning on getting up you 'lashed up' your hammock with a series of half hitches (7) going down the length of the hammock with a rope tie. If you didn't make the knots tight the whole hammock went limp & saggy - 'a lump of shit lad', from instructor, 'do it again'. The hammock was then stowed upright in a 'hammock bay' until required again. Your name & number was stamped on your hammock, so it was easy to see who had not 'lashed up' correctly. You had to untie the hammock body sheet from the eyelet ties to lay it out in the washroom to scrub it clean. On sunny days you often got the call to 'air bedding' in the sun as a hygiene move.

The next day we had the task of putting our names on our items of clothing with the wooden lettering blocks, which was messy to say the least. We managed it all in the end including sewing our taped name tags onto our socks. Most of us had never been near a needle & thread so it was a huge learning curve, some were hopeless at it. We were also issued with our solid canvas webbing gear – white anklets with brass buckles and a white belt with brass buckle & tabs which we had to clean with 'brasso' liquid without staining the white webbing. This took quite some mastering without it being 'picked up' on inspection. For our black boots I decided to use the 'spit & polish' method which one of the Comms old boys Wes showed me how to do. It took ages to accomplish the shine, but it was worth it as they looked quite smart.

Our round caps were unattractive, but an old boy from Comms showed me how to put a 'bow wavy' into it to make it look a bit smarter. Dits got a bit carried away with his bow wave and ended up getting stung for it as it was too steeply bowed. The black cap tally HMNZS Tamaki was tied onto the cap using a bow. This took quite a few goes before it resembled a smart bow which I then ironed to set it. The chin stay on the cap was sewn into the side so when windy your cap would stay put. In the evenings, the dormitory was tidied up ready for 'Rounds' an inspection by the Officer of the Day who was accompanied by the duty Petty Officer and the duty bugler. The duty bugler would alert the occupants by playing G just before the doorway, this was handy as you heard it from the next-door dorm so had a warning to do last minute tidying. We got picked up for heaps of problems initially but gradually we learnt the rules and became proficient at getting the dorm ready for inspection, especially cleaning underneath things which they always checked.

In the evenings and during some free time for 'make & mend' you used the time to firstly repair any items of kit, mainly socks which needed darning a lot. We had no idea at first on how to do this but learnt from the odd kindlier old boy who was willing to help show us. Our initial uniform issue was free but after that you had to pay to replace items of kit, so it was in your best interest to keep things in good repair and make sure everything was marked with your name, so items did not go missing. Ironing was also a new skill to learn as you put creases in your work shirt and trousers. To make sure of tidiness, you could check your state of uniform dress by using mirrors placed around the camp. They were also used for saluting training should you not have the correct technique & been picked up by a GI or Instructor.

Washing (dhobying) your kit needed some thought. We used a bar soap (pussers hard) which was literally brick hard and a mid-brownish colour and had an acidic aroma but when wet gave up a soapy cream especially good on washing hammocks & shirt collars. As it was done by hand it would pay to keep an eye on the weather forecast. It helped to wash everything when finer weather was due as it all dried reasonably quickly and so you could avoid using the drying rooms which seemed to make the clothes material harsher & took longer to dry overall. Line dried washing seemed easier to iron.

We had the library close by for reading material in the evenings but also a ready supply of comics (Mickey Ducks) which were popular at the time so got passed around constantly by recruits 'The Phantom' a favourite. Also, in the evenings you could go to the YMCA for a drink of Coke or Lemonade (Goffers) and a biscuit/cake, at a charge of course.

One other obstacle worth mentioning was the likelihood of a night raid on your dormitory by another dorm crew. This could involve water hoses and fire appliances so could be rather messy and cleaning up took ages. Of course, punishment retribution came with it as there could be no innocent parties but, in some ways, it did lessen tensions in the camp and became quite a talking point for ages afterwards but brought on the odd 'knuckle' for a deemed slight.

We also had to attend Religious instruction by Padre Harry Taylor, this was not so bad as I had to attend compulsory bible classes on Sundays as a child so could remember a lot of the subjects that was discussed. This was probably borne out by me being awarded the 39th Boys Divinity Prize as we all had to do a test towards the end of training. Later in the year, Tom decided to become an altar boy & join up with Jack Rosewarne, Lou Gibb & Neal Catley.

## Training.

Our class was 39<sup>th</sup> Seaman Boys and we had all joined as seaman boy's 2<sup>nd</sup> class. It was a largish intake, it was split into class 1 & class 2 for easier control. In the first few days getting to know each other I felt a bit like a fish out of water. I had been brought up mostly rural but most of the other boys were city boys and quite street wise. Most already smoked but as a nonsmoker I learned to become one to fit in. (don't smoke? What are ya). I got chatting to Aussie Arnott one day. That evening he called the dorm guys that were around together and announced. 'Mike Catlow didn't know what a 'wank' was. There was much laughter all around and I felt suitably embarrassed. Geoff promptly announced that a wanking contest would therefore be held that very evening. The guys decided I needed a bit of an education, so it was a call for swear words and meaning to be aired so everyone was up to speed. It turned out to be quite an entertaining evening and it 'broke the ice' for us all to get to know one another. However, for quite a while after that incident I was stopped and asked 'what does xxxxxx mean Mike and if I didn't know I soon did. I even thanked Aussie for his betrayal of our discussion after it turned out well in the end.

It always seems that with groups of boys/youths there is always one poor lad to pick on & become the butt of jokes etc. One young lad was a bit overweight and struggled on parade training & PT. The GI's I think treated him very harshly and he could, in their eyes, not do anything correctly. He was also rumoured to be the victim of the infamous gash shute punishment by his peers. I liked



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him though and felt sorry for the way he was treated. Bullying was quite common but not so much different from my schooldays where it was rife. Well-built guys wanted domination and control. There was also the 'old boy' control as they had claimed many 'rights' because they were there first, more on that later.

The first six weeks were spent on intense Seamanship training i.e. parade training, boat work, tying a myriad of knots, seamanship knowledge, navigation, ship layout/parts/design/nautical naming of same and plenty of maintenance work around the camp. The boat work was interesting as we had to be familiar with the whaler & the cutter type boats. The boats had to be hand launched & retrieved by us boys from the beach and it was hard work. It must have been comical to see us getting into the boats and attempting to row or sail them the first time. The instructors had their work cut out to get us organized and it confirmed to me that no way would I be useful as a seaman. I was later part of a crew in a whaler for the Auckland Regatta, we came third, but I do not remember how many boats there were in the race!

We also had to do a clothed swimming test off the beach which I think was swimming about 50 yards without sinking. I was not a great swimmer but just managed to pass the test all the same. We once did a short swimming course at Te Aroha High School while I was a pupil there but that was done in the tepid baths in Te Aroha Domain and there was no comparison with the water temperature at Tamaki for the test.

Each morning at 'wakey - wakey' you donned your togs for a run down to the beach for a dip into the sea. Some of us learned to wet our hair from the tap halfway up the hill to look as though you had been in the sea if the instructor was not nearby. After showering and dressing for the days training schedule and after breakfast you had to form up outside your dormitory in alphabetical sequence – 'fall in alphabetical order 'Arnott, Barnett, Beck, Catlow, Clarke' at least by this method you never forgot those names over the years. I think they used this alphabetical method to get familiar with the recruit's names & faces. You did not stroll around the camp you were meant to be 'on the double'. If entering the quarterdeck, you saluted. The Quarterdeck was a low stanchion roped area outlined in white paint adjacent to the drill hall & this is where the mast was mounted to fly the flags of the day – usually the white ensign.

Parade training was incessant, and we felt we were constantly 'picked on' by the Gunnery Instructors e.g. Hamilton, 'Taffy Rawle, commonly known as GIs' who were led by Chief GI Barnes. However, most of us were unfamiliar with marching especially with .303 rifles and we must have presented as a comical bunch stumbling about. One or two had trouble keeping in step i.e. they led with their left foot and left arm. One guy never quite mastered it, so he was usually excused marching on important occasions.

Our webbing gear which consisted of white anklets, and a white canvas belt with brass fasteners always had to be spot on as the GI's inspected us before we started training. What's that on your face lad? Don't know sir- That's bum fluff from your arse lad, get it off. How on earth do you do that? A razor consisted of two metal flat pieces on which a paper-thin blade was placed between them and held together by a screw on handle. Much trial & error with blood everywhere and everyone thinking it's a huge joke. Those blades were vicious things. Later we took part (along with other classes) in an inspection Guard parade where all the parade training we had learned was put on show, we all did this rather well and were quite proud of ourselves (I am on far right of the Guard photograph attached).

It was in later years that we were able to see parade training in context and we were a little surer the GI's mothers really did love them after all and that they could even have had a father). Divisions took place on many occasions where all recruits were put on parade and inspected. Usually this was in No1 Uniform. I disgraced myself on the very first one by fainting on a hot day. I do not think I will ever forget that feeling in your head just before it happens. I made sure in future

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to move slightly and wiggle your toes to avoid it. You could usually move very slightly if you were not in the front rank on parade.

### 39th Boys class 1 (see class photo)

Brian Rippon, Bruce Barnett, Vernon Illingworth, Neville Hutchison, Kevin Groube , Anthony Swaney, Trevor Kettle, Warren Mullins, Garry Neill, Geoffrey Smith, Thomas Dowling, Trevor (Crumpy) Clarke , Leonard Beck, Jack (Rosie) Rosewarne, Kerry (Shady) Lane, White (ex 38th boys), Alexander (ex 38th boys), Mervyn (Beachball) Inch, & Neil Hunt, The Course Instructor was PO Jack Blampied. Our initial Divisional officer was Lt Steward.

### 39th Boys class 2 (no intake photos seem to exist of this group)

Michael Catlow, Barry Watson, Bruce Cole (Te Kooro), Trevor Flay, Ngaro (Nig) Tuhoe, John (Dits) MacLean, George Hill, Norman Tyree, Frederick Paton, John (Aussie) Arnott, Joffre York, Andrew Scott.

We were also disappointed to learn that we thought we had left school behind forever, but we then had to attend Naval School ET1 & ET2 and re-learn the school stuff we had either originally ignored or conveniently forgotten. I was horrified when general math's was replaced by Physics type subjects, but this was explained so well by the Officer School instructors (e.g. using block and tackle as one of the entities) that it was quite enjoyable learning. English was not so much of a problem as this had been one of my better subjects at school (along with Art, History and Geography).

### Old Boys.

Old boys could be a tetchy lot. One day much later in training three of us were in animated discussion going past the dining area when an old boy said "I heard that, you insulted my girlfriend/mother/sister (whaaat?) I will sort you out later. True to his threat he later appeared in my dorm and proceeded to punch me, he was a lot bigger so making a fight of it would be disastrous, so I assumed the foetal position and waited while he kicked and punched until his anger abated, he then just stormed out. I never saw that guy again during my Naval career or ever at reunions, it was as though he had disappeared, not that I care. A couple of days later Padre Harry said he had heard I had been assaulted and did I want to report it. I said no that is the worst thing to do. I said I had sorted it anyway by putting a curse on him to receive at least tenfold the hurt I received. The padre was horrified and said that was not good and what would my parents think. I told him my mother came from a long line of witches and she would be ok with it. The upshot was that I was detailed off to have extra religious instruction lessons on the art of forgiveness. Sorry padre but Karma wins out in the end as I have witnessed a lot in my life & I am convinced it works. The lesson learnt was - do not have conversations within earshot of old boys - to avoid them hearing something they think they heard & concerns them, when really, it's none of their business.

One favoured punishment dished out by old boys was 'nuggeting' where the offending new boy was held down, stripped, and got covered in black shoe polish including the genitals. Another was getting washed down with scrubbing brushes if they thought anyone's hygiene was not up to scratch. It was generally considered safer to avoid being around old boys as much as possible in case they took offence for any reason and had you cleaning their boots or running errands under a threat of retribution if you did not comply. We were issued an allowance of raw tobacco (weren't we lucky boys) and if an old boy had run out of 'weed', we were available to make up the shortfall. I did not mind this too much as I was not a keen smoker anyway & it lessened any threats. I only smoked to 'fit in'. The habit gradually took hold of course and it was many decades later before I was able to finally get over smoking when it was affecting my health. I must say that when I

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unwrapped my first packet of raw tobacco ('roll your own') the smell of it was quite pleasant which I can still recall, funny how something that smells that nice can be proved to be so deadly but in those days smoking was the norm by almost everyone and nobody ever mentioned any health risk at any time. I cannot remember how much tobacco cost. We got paid about 10 shillings per week & the same amount was put aside into our 'ledger' account to be accessed later when we got a bit older & wiser. This was a good move by the Navy otherwise we would have spent it all, probably unwisely.

### **Punishment (Jankers).**

Talking out of turn (or any slight felt by the instructor or GI) at parade training or at any time could result in 'rifle above your head' running around the parade ground, that was really hard work after a few minutes. I also gradually learned that spontaneous witticisms do not a happy GI or Instructor make. Another punishment meted out was 'Mary Ann' which consisted of being sent running down to the beach and back to collect sand with a fire bucket in each hand and tipping the contents out in the long jump sand pit at the end of the sports field. After a few of these sessions you were left really knackered.

The Quarterdeck area was also used for swearing punishment. You were given a cocktail from the sick bay which you sipped while calling out 'Ahoy, ahoy, ahoy, I am a foul mothed boy' (a swig of the mixture) 'Now my mouth is washed out clean, no more I'll use foul words obscene' (swig), then a repeat of this routine until all the mixture was gone – which made you feel as though you wanted to be sick and some were. It did not cure the language but just made everyone careful about where you used it and try not to get caught out. Swearing just became a normal way of life & you did not mistake the meaning or the menace in the delivery. Saying 'go away' or 'be quiet' did not, as a statement, cut the mustard.

Another punishment worth mentioning was 'frog hopping' with a lashed hammock carried over shoulders because of too much nighttime chatter and/or any mayhem. This was also a tough punishment, that hammock got quite heavy after a few minutes in the squat position. The stand-up version was marching where you draped the hammock around your neck with the rope lashing making its mark. Sometimes it was carried out on the hill. Doubling with the hammock over your shoulders was also popular with some instructors.

The least physical problematic punishment was the "Kit Muster" 'laying out of your uniform kit' which turned out to be a good way of making sure your kit was kept in good condition, clean, and in good repair. It took quite some time to get everything ready for this offence. (Catlow – not funny, kit muster - groan). Everything was laid out on the floor on your flat, spare hammock square in column rows with your stamped name showing on each item of kit & all in line. Many boys hated this punishment, but I did not mind it too much as I got used to it and my laying out times got shorter. I even had an official photo taken of one of them, a copy of which probably resides amongst all the old Tamaki photo negatives and not seen the light of day. My copy disappeared years later due to a house burglary & before scanning was available. This kit muster training came in very handy when later I was the delegated 'volunteer' OD rate to do a kit muster for a FO2 inspection in Singapore while on HMNZS Pukaki F424.

One particular more kindly instructor took me aside one day and explained to me that none of the GI's & instructors (mostly ex RN) were able to have a sense of humour as it was a serious business turning grotty pimply boys into sailors and if I wanted to avoid punishments I had to lose my sense of humour, fully conform & 'button my lip', at least while I was under training or I would have to suffer the consequences.(so that was the secret!) I realised this made complete sense but sometimes the urge to comment on a training statement became a little too tempting Sir, 'why are ship windows round?'. Civilian names for parts of ships were a sure-fire way of getting on the wrong side of the Instructors or GI's, but my inane sense of humour spurred me on & to hell with



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the consequences – at least I got fit & Mary Anne gave me strong hands. After all, according to the Naval Recruiter I was an 'immature & talks too much schoolboy' & throw in that I was just a grotty teenager growing up with so much to learn it's no wonder I had to learn the hard way & I did sorely need discipline in my life at the time.

### Term 1 report.

**Gunnery** – Average boy. Is responding to parade training.

**School**. No outstanding ability but is a trier. Very creditable ET1 result.

**Communications**. Average boy. A keen trier, up to 7 weeks standard.

**Sport**. He could show more interest in Divisional sporting activities.

**General**, Has made a satisfactory start. Needs to build up his confidence.

### The Band.

Everyone had to do camp cleaning duties each day, toilets (heads), bathroom (wash place), & laundry etc. and cleaning anything brass, copper or anything shiny of which there were numerous items, this chore entailed using a wad of cotton waste & brasso. The tins of brasso we used came in handy when nearly empty as we tossed them into the 44gallon drums used for rubbish burning, spectacular explosions were made to amuse us. Some got detailed off as 'house boys' to do work on the officer's homes & gardens. I did not enjoy cleaning chores that had to be done repeatedly until senior rate satisfaction, there had to be a solution, as with all dilemmas, so...Tom, 'Dits' and I volunteered to join the Boys Band led by Lt Townsend (on loan from RN) as buglers. The band was not sophisticated, just bugles and drums (a big base & snares) & fronted by a mace bearer. Lt Townsend was fastidious about having our bugles and white webbing gear spotless, we wore white cotton gloves while on parade, they kept the sweat off the copper bugle frame which made it easier to clean. We had an ornate corded rope with tassels at each end (like curtain tie backs) which was secured to two points on the bugle frame, and then slung over our shoulder, this made sure it was always at our side ready to be used and more importantly, you wouldn't drop them. I only have one photo of the band which was sent to me by Trevor Kettle – I hope others exist somewhere.

This job consisted of marching down to the beach for practice sessions and playing our instruments which was quite enjoyable and better than general duties in the camp in my opinion. The band mace bearer was initially Lyndsay Guilford (V/S old boy) but later Trevor Kettle (39<sup>th</sup> Boys) when Lyndsay's time was up on Tamaki. The head bugler (Silver Bugler was the term) was Bob Timutimu an old boy (37<sup>th</sup> Boys I think). His bugle was silver plated while ours were common copper which required a fair amount of cleaning maintenance to make them shine but it spurred me on to be a better bugle player in case we were elevated to the lofty height of silver bugler. We were also issued a buglers badge (red for No3 dress and a wire gold one for No1 dress) this was sewn onto our right forearm of the uniform.

Those of us deemed improved buglers by the bandmaster went onto a duty roster. It was one of our duties to wake up the camp in the mornings playing 'wakey- wakey' (reveille) over the camp intercom system from the quartermaster's shack. It was also an invitation for the quartermaster to recite his poetical salty ditty for the day. It was a pleasure to do as I had already been up an hour earlier to get ready for this. Being up early meant a nice warm shower which was a bonus & with a liberal dose of 'foo foo' and clean clothes I was ready to face the day. We also did all the other bugle calls fall out/in, Stand easy, Sunset, Colours. We also got to play 'last post' on the quarterdeck in the evening which I quite enjoyed.

Later in training while the rest of our mates paraded and did the guard at Divisions we watched from the sidelines as band members, practically invisible. I found this a satisfactory arrangement as we were rarely thoroughly inspected so less chance of being 'picked up' on some misdemeanor. However, this did not mean we could not be called upon by the Chief GI to

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participate in guard training as 'band boys' were considered to be still in need of parade training and should share the burden of being in a guard to avoid band boys 'going soft'.

### LEAVE.

Leave to go ashore did not happen while we underwent initial training but once this was finished and I became a Boy Telegraphist an opportunity arose for taking short day leave in Auckland city. One effective way of getting some pre-approved leave on Sundays was to volunteer (Tom and I were starters) for the Mayors Hospitality Sunday which consisted of learning to dance at the Auckland Town Hall with girl partners supplied by the Navy League which had large rooms upstairs in a building close to the Town Hall. Part of this was run by a Mrs. Patterson whose husband was a merchant navy captain. Her daughter was one of the girls supplied as a partner and she was assigned to me to learn to dance, we got on famously. We were supplied with tea/coffee and food for the day and later we had to make our way back down to Admiralty steps to be transported back to Motuihe Island. At the end of dance training which took quite a few weeks they had a big organized dance at the Town Hall with other like-minded groups. It was quite an enjoyable time and at least I learned to dance & make Sundays more interesting. The girls also came over to Motuihe Island on 10<sup>th</sup> August for a dance evening held in the Tamaki PT hall along with nurses recruited from the nurse's homes in Auckland. There were about a hundred girls as I recall.

### Fitness.

Physical education was another challenging task. Our general fitness initially was not great so an introduction to exercises, climbing ropes in the gym and rushing about in general was the order of the day. We were walking past the gymnasium door one day discussing our PTI instructor Pippy Boyd when I casually mentioned 'Hah I love to eat pippies for breakfast'. The door opened further, and a voice declared 'I heard that Catlow' sure enough, it was Pippy. Punishment being 'on the rack Catlow, legs away' – don't they ever give up! The rack was a series of slats horizontally fixed to the gym wall for climbing, sometimes you held on by your arms but then had to release your legs to have you hanging on the wall at a 90-degree angle, it didn't take long before your limbs tired. Climbing up ropes was no easy task either. Running around and using the vault was a doddle in comparison. Being selected by Pippy as the class instructional boxing dummy was another cross to bear but I found much to my surprise that I wasn't too bad at it (I was a Southpaw so different from many) and landed the odd good punch to the PTI which seemed a satisfactory retribution in my eyes. I also made the mistake of being too smart one day and kicking hard what I thought was a lone soccer ball, but which was really a hard 'medicine' ball, so it was off to the sick bay with badly bruised and swollen toes –but a break from PT anyway for a wee while.

We also did cross country runs over the island – I did not mind these either as I had done plenty of this at school and enjoyed it, along with the 440- and 880-yard track events. I was considered as having a 'weedy' physique by the instructors (I called it athletic) and was soon rejected from the rugby team so was detailed off to play hockey of which I had not a clue. This was not quite the doddle I thought and had quite a few injuries to shins and arms. It was quite a fierce battle at times with sticks slashing in all directions. One day much later I asked Lou Gibb if it was favouritism that got him selected for rugby over me, he just laughed. Lou was a muscly lad and an ideal prop prospect.

### Sickness.

Generally, the health seemed to be quite good in the camp. The sick bay was located downhill from the gymnasium. I kept rather good health overall. I ended up once with suspected appendicitis but after being watched over & medicated at sick bay for a week it was decided not to operate, and the symptoms cleared up eventually.

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The big event of the year was the huge national influenza pandemic which laid the camp low, those of us who escaped initially were employed as errand boys for the SBA's for those that were sick supplying water, light food, washing up etc. which was not a task we shunned. We were glad it was not us laid up & we were eager to help. Although very fit I finally got the dreaded lurgy towards the end of the epidemic but was not as sick as were a few of the guys, some were in a bad way.

In February 1957, a new influenza A (H2N2) virus emerged in East Asia, triggering a pandemic ("Asian Flu"). This H2N2 virus was comprised of three different genes from an H2N2 virus that originated from an avian influenza A virus, including the H2 hemagglutinin and the N2 neuraminidase genes. It was first reported in Singapore in February 1957, Hong Kong in April 1957, and in coastal cities in the United States in summer 1957. The estimated number of deaths was 1.1 million worldwide and 116,000 in the United States.

### Being a Communicator.

After our initial seamanship training some of us became the 39<sup>th</sup> W/T as Boy Tels 2<sup>nd</sup> class. This meant a shift from Drake 2 down to Nelson 1 to be nearer the Comms School. The class instructor was POTEL Jonah Whale and the DO was Lt. Murray Verran. My classmates were George Hill, Fred Paton, John 'Dits' Maclean, Ngaro 'Nig' Tuhoe and Bruce Te Kooro. Training initially was based on the INT test to get used to 'dots and dashes' together with Telegraphic typewriter training. This was a musical recording of the Pitman's typing exercises 'Begin after 3/4/5 taps' key touch clunk, clunk, clunk etc. 'carriage return' "" After I set fire to the grass I ran to the far end of the field "etc

After that it was getting down to the real task of wireless telegraphy with Morse played by tape at various increasing speeds as we improved. I practiced heaps after hours as well to improve Morse reading and to memorise the phonetic alphabet. We also had to do the basics of flashing light.

Later in the course we were also introduced to basic radio theory, how circuits were made up etc. and how it all worked on ships. Basic Cryptography theories came much later. One of Jonah's sayings was 'Pretty Polly always pisses the pot' (PPAPTP) to make us remember how a signal was made up. We were also made familiar with radio receivers to listen to the world of signals sent around the world. There was also a Morse training signal sent out on a certain frequency which was on a repeated loop which you could tune into for practice. The 'Sputnik' spacecraft signals were also causing excitement at that time of space history.

Nig eventually dropped out of the class to return to the seamanship branch. Bruce, another good friend unfortunately got quite sick and missed a lot of the training, so he transferred to the Buntings Branch of the class intake of 40<sup>th</sup> VS class to join Dave Crick, Jon Stafford, Colin Jacobs, Dennis Derwin, Grenville Darroch & Richard Fearnley.

The old boy's W/T class was soon to leave Tamaki, some names I remember Te One Wesley, Barney Kamau, Joe Aranga.

We became Boy Tels 1<sup>st</sup> class 6 months after arriving at Tamaki. This also meant a decent No 1 uniform for our newly awarded gold badges, decent pair of dress shoes & and some leave to go home to Hamilton for a short break before training re-commences. I enjoyed the break home on the farm and helped as much as possible, but it was soon over and back by train to Auckland and on to Tamaki. Training continued at a more progressive pace for the next few months as we were getting the hang of Morse code reading & sending and it was becoming second nature. Jonah was a good instructor as he covered so much Comms wise and of course heaps of tales of his time of his joining the Navy. When our end of year exam came around, we were tested on all we had learnt in our part 1 training. This also meant our time at Tamaki was almost over.

The 12 months training seemed to have gone quickly and a lot had happened. We had grown up fast and learnt many lessons. We had made friends and the occasional 'enemy' but for me I was

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pleased I had made it through the year without undue harm. We packed up our kitbags with all our possessions and once more prepared to make the Fairmile journey and say goodbye to Motuihe for the last time. Looking back, it seemed tough discipline but then I needed it, I doubt it could be done like it was in this modern age, It was an experience I have always valued & pleased to have been a part of it. I grew up, but I was now different from the shy weedy youngster who arrived at the beginning of the year. I realised too that I was no longer a new boy but an old boy, As we were leaving another class of new boys were being assembled to shortly go to the island – best of luck guys.

Term  
2 report.

**Gunnery.** Quite smart. Produces average results at parade training.

**School.** Fair on ET1 technical, slow with new work.

**Communications.** Good in Morse, slower in other subjects, eager to learn. Passed badge test.

**Sport.** Very slow reflexes, not a great quantity of energy. Will work if pushed.

**General.** An intelligent boy who has worked well in his technical subjects. Not enough interest shown in Divisional activities. Allows his appearance to slip at times. Awarded class intake Divinity Prize.

**DO's report.** Passed out very well in final exams, gaining two months seniority. Normally clean & tidy appearance but kit needs watching. Should improve with sea training.

**My footnote:** DO's report comment on kit seems a bit tongue in cheek after all my kit musters. Perhaps he was even hinting for future DO's to continue the trend?

## Comms training Part 2.

Part two Boys training was undertaken at HMNZS Philomel where we were housed first in C5 dormitory. It was a big mix of old and new sailors; most were in between drafts or undergoing some course instruction. It was a lively bunch in that dorm & on weekends we listened in to the radio for children hour as it was a hoot. We enjoyed all the stories "Diana & the golden apples", Little Red Engine & others. We ignored the Ads but one unfortunately still stays in my head, I have no idea why that is. I certainly did not need dentures.

"Oh my dentures, oh my dentures woe is me what can I do" "Take it into Mr. Geddes and he'll fix it just like new" "What's the address what's the address hurry please oh tell me do" "Top of Queen Street on the corner and the numbers 492".

One highlight of getting away from Comms training was a bus trip out to Whangaparoa Peninsular where the navy had a rifle range. We were instructed in the safety arts for using lethal weapons and we were able to fire handguns .45 revolvers, .303 rifles at a target and firing of a Bren & Lanchester machine guns. I think Dits got the most out of the atmosphere of a live shoot. I found it all quite exciting (we were gung-ho teenagers after all) but I got quite a sore shoulder trying to deal with the kick of the .303 while learning to get a proper firing stance.

The Comms house was at the top of the hill beside RNZNH hospital. Fred Guest & Jim Blackburn were some of the names I recall from the Comms house. The Comms DO was Lt Iggy Biggs. We still had our class instructor POTEL Whale to continue with though, but other W/T instructors were also in the mix for radio theory and basic cryptography.

The exam was on 23 May 1958 for Junior Telegraphist. Thus, I ended my initial training as a radio operator as I prepared for going to sea on my first draft. I was now a Junior Tel and no longer a seaman boy after 17 months of training.

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The drafts were promulgated on the notice board outside the Regulating Office near B3 which we perused daily to see what was there. One day my name appeared, and I was drafted to HMNZS Lachlan for a survey of the Pacific Islands. Toms name also appeared and he was to join HMNZS Pukaki for the bomb tests. I felt disappointed not to go on a real warship, but Operation Grapple affected a huge number of guys medically so in hindsight by going to the Pacific Islands instead meant I could have avoided illness myself. Tom though seems to have avoided the worst effects of the tests thank goodness. After Lachlan returned to Auckland, I joined HMNZS Pukaki on completion of the bomb tests so met up with Tom again (who was already onboard), for a 12-month FESR commission.

But as they say that is another story...

39th Boys W/1 HMNZS Lamaki Motuine Island



John 'Dits' MacLean George Hill POTE 'Jonah' Whale Fred Paton Michael Catlow

John & Michael have buglers badge on right forearm below branch badge, unfortunately the photo was taken on a windy day.



Bruce Te Kooro & Michael Catlow (with camera) – photo image in dress mirror outside Nelson 1 dormitory.



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Wooden name plate made up of single letters joined up on a bar. This was dipped into a paint mixture and then onto your items of kit. This is the print remaining in my Seamanship Manual which I still possess, why, I have no idea.



Back- in hammocks - Left-George Hill – Right-Michael Catlow (holding on to metal swing up bar)  
On table left- Blue Craig – Right-Jim Jamieson (both old boys)

Below Tom as altar boy – Church on Sundays.



L-R Lou Gibb Tom Dowling Padre Taylor Jack Rosewarne Neal Catley



This guard is a mix of classes not just 39<sup>th</sup> boys. (2<sup>nd</sup> rank mostly hidden from view).

Front rank – as my memory serves me Left to Right

Gl Hamilton, Laure Jones, ?, James Cameron, Lindsay Roberts, Dick Hawea, John Purcell, Jofre York, Trevor Flay, John MacLean, Bruce Barnett, Mervyn Inch, Tony Swaney, George Hill, Puki Moreno, Peter Usmar, Michael Catlow

Note 1 Back rank between Trevor Flay & Dits MacLean is a glimpse of Andrew Scott

Note 2 Back rank between Merv Inch & Tony Swaney is a glimpse of Warren Mullins

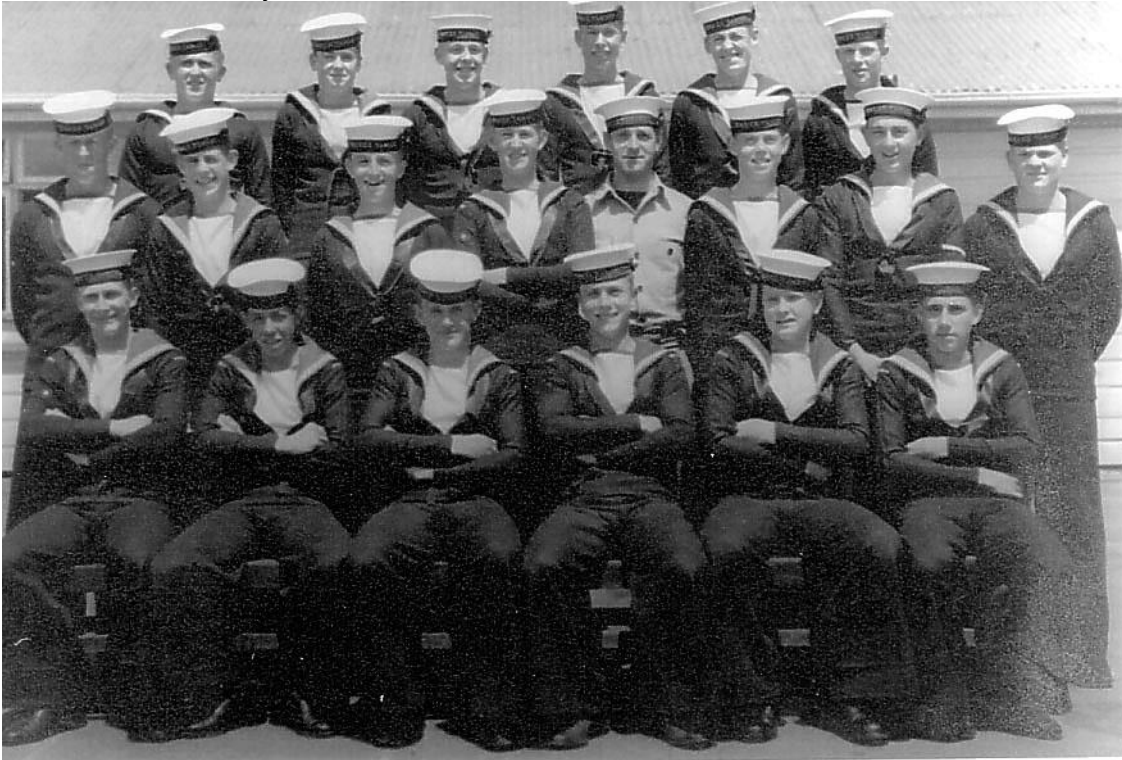
Note 3 Back rank right side of Peter Usmar is glimpse of Bruce Cunningham



'The Boys Band' led by Trevor Kettle as Mace bearer (the supplier of the photo). The drummer on front left is Neville Hutchinson.

Unfortunately, us buglers did not appear in this photo. I hope there are more photos held somewhere or archived.

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The other half - Class 1- 39<sup>th</sup> Boys (have not found a better-quality photo yet)

Back row L-R

Brian Rippon-Bruce Barnett-Vernon Illingworth-Neville Hutchinson-Kevin Groube-Tony Swaney

Middle row L-R

Trevor Kettle-Warren Mullins-Garry Neill-Geoffrey Smith-Jack Blampied (instructor)-Tom Dowling-Trevor Clarke-Leonard Beck

Front row L-R

Jack Rosewarne -Kerry Lane-White & Alexander (both ex 38<sup>th</sup>)-Mervyn Inch-Neil Hunt.





My final guard duty from Boys part 2 training held in HMNZS Philomel  
Some faces I recognise

LH 1<sup>st</sup> rank 9<sup>th</sup> down from front Fred Paton-10<sup>th</sup> down Bevan Lawes, 11<sup>th</sup> down Dick Hawea, 15<sup>th</sup> down Tom Dowling,

Middle rank front David Neil, 7<sup>th</sup> down Rock Graham,

3<sup>rd</sup> rank 2<sup>nd</sup> down Randy Pearce, 3<sup>rd</sup> down- White, 4<sup>th</sup> Down Michael Catlow, 5<sup>th</sup> down Lindsay Roberts, 8<sup>th</sup> down John MacLean,





