

RNVR TO RNZN – LEARNING HOW TO LEAD

BIOGRAPHY BY KIM NEWTH

In the early hours of a cold Christchurch winter morning – 16 July 1922 – James Roland Calder came kicking into the world, the third child born to his parents Cecelia and Leslie Calder.¹ Their roots were north of the Waimakariri River, with Cecelia having grown up in Kaiapoi while Leslie, a builder and joiner², had been born in Rangiora. James, however, was raised in Christchurch in the family's Disraeli Street home, bordering Sydenham and Addington.

'James' is the name on his birth certificate but pretty soon his family switched to using the more informal 'Jim'. He was very much 'the baby' in the family, his older sister Jean having been born during the First World War and his older brother, Percy, born after his father had left to serve as a private in that war.

In his early years, Jim attended nearby Selwyn Street Kindergarten and was then enrolled at West Christchurch District High School³. "I was there from the time I started in Primer One through to Standard Two."⁴

After finishing school at West Christchurch, he was enrolled in clerical training at Christchurch Technical College before starting work as an office boy at the New Zealand Farmers' Co-operative's premises in Cashel Street where the hours were long and the work dispiriting. "I did not want to be a clerk. I worked on the mail table, sorting and distributing mail and being a general roustabout. I was the lowest of the low."

Eventually though he worked his way into the company's banking department, tasked with managing budgets for indebted farmers. The hard years of the Depression had drained many farm budgets.

In 1936, Jim's brother Percy joined the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy⁵. This proved an important turning point in his life; Percy was to serve in the Navy for 25 years. Percy's choice also shaped Jim's war service.

Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

Before the outbreak of war, Jim remembers HMS *Leander*⁶ calling into Lyttelton, with Percy on board. By mid-1939, at a time when many teenage boys were lining up for the

¹ Cecelia Elizabeth Beatrice (nee Mellor) and Leslie Benjamin Cooper Calder.

² In his younger years, Leslie had served his apprenticeship with James Shaw, a builder and undertaker in Amberley and Rangiora.

³ This school eventually evolved into today's Hagley College.

⁴ He also attended intermediate there; South Christchurch Intermediate was being built at this time but Jim says its construction was delayed by the Depression.

⁵ 'An order-in-council in March 1921 created a naval board to control local naval activities. Three months later, on 20 June 1921, another formally constituted the 'New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy', with a small staff, the Navy Office, in Wellington.' From 'NZ Division of the Royal Navy', <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/royal-new-zealand-navy/nz-division-royal-navy>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 20-Dec-2012

⁶ 'In the mid-1930s the naval forces were significantly upgraded with the replacement of the D-class cruisers with more modern Leander-class cruisers, HMS *Achilles* and *Leander*. As previously, the ships were borrowed from the Royal Navy with New Zealand paying their running costs.' Ibid, see section entitled 'Modernisation'.

Territorial Forces, 16-year-old Jim opted instead to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR), New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. This reserve force, which had been established in 1925, numbered 670 men by 1939.⁷

“I joined in May 1939, mainly because I think of the influence of my brother who was already in the navy.”

The RNVR was formed in England in 1903 in response to political pressure for a reserve of part-time officers and seamen. The idea was that peacetime members of the RNVR would be quickly mobilized in the event of war⁸. New Zealand was keen to take part. The RNVR (NZ) began in Auckland in 1925, quickly attracting strong interest from young men with experience in yachts and small boats. The Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago Divisions were started in 1928.⁹

Along with other volunteers in the Canterbury RNVR intake of May 1939, Jim was issued with a uniform and a kit bag. He recalls attending parade on cold winter nights with belt, gaiters and big boots on and marching up and down St Asaph Street.

“The first parade I was on was Queen’s Birthday 1939 and that’s when all the territorials [were there] at that time of course [and] there were air force territorials as well. So the three armed services turned out and marched from King Edward Barracks under the Bridge of Remembrance down Cashel Street. There were crowds on the side of the street ... [It] was quite a day. We formed up outside the cathedral and we were inspected and then dismissed for the rest of the day.”

Jim says his instructors at this time included leading seamen Pete Gibson and Ray Pugh Williams, while Sandy Jackson was the petty officer in charge of his division. “I was in A Division and we met on a Monday night.”

Commanding the Canterbury Division of the Naval Reserve was Captain Ralph Newman¹⁰. Jim remembers him as “a thorough gentleman” who seemed like a kind of grandfather figure to the young men. Some of the other senior staff who made an impression included First Lieutenant George Tidswell¹¹, Sid Hicks (in charge of communications division) and Lieutenant John D. Kay, one of the divisional officers.

By the time war was declared, Jim recalls they were already on a war footing. Some of the older men were immediately despatched to Auckland as crew for DEMs¹² (with many later returning to serve on HMS *Achilles* and *Leander*).

Mobilisation for training as an Ordinary Seaman came at the end of the year for Jim, who was despatched for three weeks to the minesweeper HMS *Wakakura*¹³. With him

⁷ Ibid, see section entitled ‘New Zealand Division established’.

⁸ From ‘In Which They Served – The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War’ by Brian Lavery, first published in 2008 by Conway, p. 17.

⁹ From ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 10.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c1.html>

¹⁰ From ‘WWII: Captain Ralph Newman CBE DSO VRD RNZNVR’, <http://www.navy.mil.nz/np/naval-reserve/naval-reserve-history/newman-reserve-hero.htm>

¹¹ ‘Frederick George Tidswell DSC, RNZNVR’, <http://www.uboat.net/allies/commanders/2470.html>

¹² Defensively equipped merchant ships.

¹³ Jim entered as ‘P’ – provisional - later becoming ‘T’ - trained. In September 1925 Cabinet approved a Naval Board proposal to fit out a trawler for minesweeping duties. ‘A ‘Castle type’ trawler of 429 tons was purchased from the Admiralty for £5000 and commissioned as HMS *Wakakura*. By the time she arrived at Auckland in January 1927, the costs of purchase, repairs, alterations and additions, and delivery amounted to £24,832. From that time onward, hundreds of New Zealand lads of the RNVR were trained in the *Wakakura*. Many of them as commissioned officers and ratings had notable records of active service during the Second World War.’ From ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical

was Bob Morten, another young volunteer who had joined at the same time. They were on board *Wakakura*, tasked with sweeping the entrance to Wellington Harbour, when the First Echelon convoy departed for the Middle East. On 5 January 1940, the troopships *Dunera* and *Sobieski* had left Lyttelton, with HMS *Leander* serving as naval escort once out of port. The following morning they joined up with the battleship HMS *Ramillies*, leading the rest of the ships—*Orion*, *Rangitata*, *Strathaird*, and *Empress of Canada*—from Wellington.¹⁴

“It was quite an experience for me to see all these ships assembled in the Cook Strait and sail away off to the Middle East with our first echelon.”

Jim remained on *Wakakura* until the end of January¹⁵ then returned to work at the Farmers Co-op for a short time – still attending regular parades - before being mobilised again at the start of March 1940 and sent to the Navy Office in Lyttelton¹⁶ as an ordinary seaman.

“[I was] the general dogsbody to look after everything there. Do the messages, clean the heads, make the tea, anything you like. I was accommodated in the Canterbury Hotel with some telegraphists.”¹⁷

A launch called *Wairangi*¹⁸ was in operation as a relief inspection vessel at this time and Jim served on board as a forward hand. Every so often the *Wairangi* would relieve another inspection vessel, *John Anderson*¹⁹ and carry relief supplies and crew.

While at the Navy Office, Jim also witnessed the departure of the Second Echelon. He remembers *Wairangi* being put to use as a service vessel, delivering mail and other supplies to HMAS *Canberra*, one of the naval escorts for the convoy, prior to the ship's departure. “The troop ship was the *Andes*, a brand new ship which had been commandeered and come out to New Zealand. It was her first voyage, a beautiful ship she was, especially built for the South American trade.”²⁰

Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 10. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c1.html>

¹⁴ From ‘20 Battalion and Armoured Regiment’ by W.A. Glue and D.J.C Pringle, Historical Publications Branch, 1957, Wellington. Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945*, pp. 11-12. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2-20Ba-c2.html>

¹⁵ “We were told that we had to remain on *Wakakura* because she was going to Auckland for a refit,” he says.

¹⁶ “It was in the old Harbour Board building opposite the post office, right on the corner, just above the railway station.”

¹⁷ Jim says the leading telegraphist was Rex Cassey, a Wellington volunteer reservist. The others, from Canterbury, were Trevor Winter, Ray Jones, Laurie Tipping and Ron Schaff. Another telegraphist Alan Aitken also turned up a little later after having been recalled from Suva. “They monitored all calls for Admiralty via a radio station. They did a twenty four hour watch.”

¹⁸ *Wairangi* was originally built as a pleasure launch for Christchurch businessman W.R. Carey but when war broke out he offered it to the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy for use as a naval examination vessel. Its naval service continued through to 1948, when it was returned to its owner. Mr Carey then sold it to the Lyttelton Harbour Board which put *Wairangi* to use as a harbour tug. From ‘Down Memory Lane’ by Jenny MacDonald, published in ‘The Seaport News’, 13 May 2011, p. 17. Online at: <http://waitematawoodys.com/2013/05/28/wairangi/>

¹⁹ ‘The *Hauti* and *John Anderson* were requisitioned for service as examination vessels for Auckland and Lyttelton.’ From <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tei-source/WH2Navy.xml>

²⁰ ‘When 5 Field Ambulance and 1 General Hospital embarked with other units of the Second Echelon at Wellington on 1 May, they went aboard the *Aquitania* and *Empress of Britain* respectively. The other ships in the convoy were the *Empress of Japan* and *Andes*. The naval escort consisted of HMAS *Canberra*, HMAS *Australia*, and HMS *Leander*.’ From ‘Medical Units of 2 NZEF in Middle East and Italy’ by J.B. McKinney, Historical Publications Branch, 1952, Wellington. Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second*

On 19 June 1940, the sinking of the trans-Pacific liner *Niagara* by German mines off Northland was a sudden and frightening reminder of the proximity of war.²¹ As Jim recalls, there was “panic” in Wellington and the navy responded by commandeering some steam trawlers to be used for mine sweeping duties.²²

“They sent the *Futurist* down to Lyttelton with a naval crew on. I can’t remember who the officers were or the crew, but her hold was still full of fish. So along with myself and a few other ratings who had been mobilised into St Asaph Street, we were sent down with buckets and shovels and we had to shovel all this fish out and put it over the side. As you can imagine we were all seasick the whole time we were doing it. Eventually we got rid of all this fish and cleaned out the hold. She was later fitted up in the hold for the crew. She had a four inch gun mounted on her bow...”

Towards the end of June 1940, Jim had returned to headquarters in St Asaph Street and was undergoing training in the lead-up to the commissioning of HMS *Monowai* in Auckland.

Serving on HMS *Monowai*

HMS *Monowai* was a converted merchant steamer which had been requisitioned from the Union Steam Ship Company and fitted out for wartime service at Devonport, Auckland. Commissioned as an armed merchant cruiser on 30 August 1940, the vessel’s antiquated weaponry included eight 6 inch guns, two 3 inch anti-aircraft guns and twin Lewis machine guns mounted on either side of the bridge. *Monowai*’s chief tasks were patrol duties and escorting freighters, tankers, and liners between Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.²³

The journey to Auckland to start a new life on board *Monowai* was memorable for Jim. He recalls sharing the trip to Wellington on the *Wahine* with men of the Otago and Christchurch drafts; a contingent from Wellington then joined them to travel by train to Auckland. By then his baggage included “a full sea kit”.

“We were marched from the Auckland Railway Station to Admiralty Steps to go across Auckland Harbour. As I remember it we were given breakfast in the old Harbour Board shed by the dock and assembled at the appropriate time ... for the formal commissioning of *Monowai* and the presentation of a Maori cloak and canoe by Princess Te Puea²⁴. The skipper was Acting Captain McClintock, ex-*Leander*.²⁵”

World War 1939-1945, p. 16. Chapter is headed ‘Voyage of Second Echelon to United Kingdom’.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2MMed-c2-1.html>

²¹ ‘The sinking shocked the public and shattered any illusions that distance alone would protect these islands from enemy attack.’ From ‘Niagara sunk by German mines off Northland’, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/em-niagara-em-sunk-by-german-mines-off-northland> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 27-Aug-2014

²² ‘In the early months of World War II the New Zealand minesweepers had no formal grouping as a flotilla. Then *Niagra* was sunk in June 1940. On 18 July 1940 the Naval Board designated the First Group for coastal minesweeping, and allocated Port minesweepers to the main ports. They were: First Group - *Futurist*, *Humphrey*, *James Cosgrove*, *South Sea*, *Thomas Currell*, *Wakakura*; Port Minesweepers - *Dutchess*, *Muritai*, *Nora Niven*; Danlayer – *Coastguard*.’ From ‘Minesweepers of the Royal New Zealand Navy’, section entitled ‘The 25th Minesweeping Flotilla’.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minesweepers_of_the_Royal_New_Zealand_Navy

²³ From ‘The New Zealand Maritime Record: *Razmak* 1925 – 1930, *Monowai* 1930 – 1960’,

<http://www.nzmaritime.co.nz/monowai/monowai.htm>

²⁴ ‘Throughout her war service, *Monowai* displayed on her bridge a model of the historical Maori canoe *Tainui* and a Maori ceremonial cloak presented by Princess Te Puea Herangi. These were tokens that, according to Maori tradition, afford protection from an enemy. Indeed, Captain Morgan, as a defiant

Crewing *Monowai* were Royal Navy reservists who had been called up²⁶, men from the RNVR's four divisions²⁷ and some who had taken "the King's Pardon"²⁸.

There was "quite a bit of training" to familiarise the crew with *Monowai*'s eight 6 inch guns, which were operated manually. They were lanyard fired and had open telescopic sights. On board communications were conducted by voice pipe – "two inch brass tube". Jim says the outdated guns, made in 1900-1901, had a maximum range of around 14,000 yards. "No wonder the HMS *Rawalpindi* and the HMS *Jervis Bay* could take no action against the German battleships that they ran up against."²⁹ *Monowai* too would have been no match for any well-armed German battleship.³⁰

Ammunition from the magazines and shell rooms was supplied to the guns via an electric hoist with a rope attached. The charges came up in cork bags covered in canvas, called Clarkson bags³¹. "The shells came up two at a time, the same as the charges." Sack

gesture from the Maori members of his crew, wore the cloak whenever his ship was in danger of attack. When the liner ended her war service Captain Morgan sent the model canoe and cloak to the Auckland Naval Base where they are now displayed.' Ibid, <http://www.nzmaritime.co.nz/monowai/monowai.htm>

²⁵ 'The ship was commissioned on 30th August, 1940, with Acting Captain H. V. P. McClintock, Royal Navy, in command.' From 'New Zealand Naval Forces Report of the Chief of the Naval Staff for the period 1st April 1940 to 31st March 1941'. Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency the Governor-General. Report, Navy Office, Wellington, 29th May, 1941.

<http://rnzncomms.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/1941.pdf>

Jim says Capt. McClintock gained the confidence of his crew by keeping the company well-informed on the ship's movements. "He was quite a stern disciplinarian but would always speak when he was about the ship. He came to us as Acting Captain and when made full Captain was appointed elsewhere. Captain Deverell was [then] appointed to command. He had a different style, more laid back, but again could dish out the punishment."

²⁶ "The RNR consisted of upper deck, engineers, electricians, paymasters, petty officers and below from the Naval Reserve. Those who had served their time, twelve years etcetera and had been placed on the RN Reserve. Incidentally these were the actual backbone of the ship's company which ultimately made us into an efficient fighting unit."

²⁷ Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. From 'Naval Reserve History', section entitled 'The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve'. <http://www.navy.mil.nz/np/naval-reserve/naval-reserve-history/default.htm>

²⁸ "This may not be factual but this is [what] I remember," says Jim. "The 'King's Pardon' was given to those who had deserted the navy and voluntarily came back at the commencement of the war ... We had about half a dozen of these people on board the *Monowai*."

²⁹ 'Long before the gallant *Rawalpindi* could get within range to use her elderly 6-inch guns, German shells, from the powerful 11-inch guns of the *Scharnhorst*, reduced her to a smashed and burning wreck. Within forty minutes the shattered vessel sank beneath the waves taking with her 265 brave men including her gallant Captain.' From 'World War II Database - HMS *Rawalpindi*',

http://ww2db.com/ship_spec.php?ship_id=509

Also: "The convoy was ordered to scatter and the *Jervis Bay*, dropping smoke floats as she went, endeavoured to bring the *Admiral Scheer* within the range of her guns. In this latter aim she never succeeded. Although her guns fired often, every shot fell short of the enemy. A seaman who watched the outmatched merchantman throw everything but its boiler plates at the *Admiral Scheer* said it was like a bulldog attacking a bear. Meanwhile 11-inch shells from the raider began to hit. The crew had little protection from blast or from splinters, and casualties were heavy.' This encounter ended with the *Jervis Bay* ablaze, her guns out of action, and the order given to abandon ship. From 'HMS *Jervis Bay* - 74th Anniversary Nov. 5 1940-2014', <http://www.hmsjervisbay.com/Story.HX84.php>

³⁰ Jim describes 'a practice shoot' with *Leander* and an Admiralty target. *Leander* started firing from about 30,000 yards, as soon as her control tower was over the horizon; *Monowai* had to get to within 14,000 yards before "a decent shot" could be made.

³¹ 'Clarkson's Case - British propellant charge container. These were flashproof containers for bag charges (cartridges). Charges were placed into these containers before they left the magazines. The Clarkson's Cases then rode up the hoists to the guns where the charges were removed only when it was

barrows were used to wheel the ammunition around on the upper decks. There were ready use racks by each gun and a ready use locker stocked with two or three charges.

“So everything was pretty primitive on the *Monowai* as would have been [the case] with any other armed merchant cruiser that was floating around.”

Living conditions on board were reasonably comfortable. Jim slept in an “Admiralty type” bunk, with 12 men to a cabin. Officers had their quarters amidships “in the old first class saloon on the promenade deck”.

Monowai’s maiden sea trials were followed by test firing of the guns. These gunnery trials were carried out by the dockyard and Kauri Point staff. “It was a proper shambles ship-wise because the guns were trained, elevated and depressed to the maximum allowable and a shot fired in each position. Bits fell off all over the place, necessitating dockyard repairs and modifications, but they assisted the efficiency of the gun crews no end.”

Jim was stationed in the fo’c’s’le³². “My action station was range finder trainer. The range finder was on a platform just aft of the bridge...My cruising station was range taker of the watch.” Jim recalls that the main rangefinder, of World War One vintage, was relatively simple to operate. To communicate with the voice pipe whilst at action stations, Jim wore a helmet-like hat with a mouth pipe.

As well as training in this specialised range finding area³³, Jim was also given general instruction to qualify as able seaman trained, AB(T).

The *Monowai*’s first journey as a naval unit was to Wellington to escort the *Rangatira* to Fiji with what remained of the Third Echelon. It was Labour Weekend 1940.³⁴ *Monowai* successfully carried out the escort duty, discharged the troops on board and their supplies, and then returned to Auckland.

Deteriorating relations with Japan, and events in Europe after the fall of France, had hastened preparations for the defence of Fiji. The greater part of the 8 Infantry Brigade Group assigned to Fiji was comprised of men retained from the Third Echelon, (who had been trained and equipped for service in the Middle East). New Zealand troops landing in Fiji on 1 November 1940 made history because ‘it was the first time a defence force from a self-governing dominion had been sent to garrison a Crown Colony of the Empire’³⁵.

time to load them into the breech. The Clarkson's Cases were reusable and were returned to the magazines for reloading.’ From ‘Definitions and Information about Naval Guns: Part 2 - Ammunition, Fuzes, Projectiles and Propellants’, by Tony DiGiulian , Updated: 28 July 2014.

http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/Gun_Data_p2.htm

³² He says the officer of the fo’c’s’le was Lieutenant Commander Paddy Bourke and the second officer of the fo’c’s’le was a Lieutenant Howard, an Auckland RNVR. The ship’s rangetaker – ‘Leading Seaman D. Holmstrom’ - gave him extensive training on the operation of the rangefinder.

³³ He was now “an acting temp. probationary CR3” - Control rating 3rd Class.

³⁴ The departure from Wellington was memorable for Jim because of a mix-up involving the Governor-General, Lord Galway. Protocol required he inspect the naval guard first but instead he made a beeline for the army which had a royal guard out. He was redirected to the navy but his cursory inspection did little to impress.

³⁵ From ‘The Pacific’ by Oliver A. Gillespie, Historical Publications Branch, 1952, Wellington. Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–1945*. Section entitled ‘II: The First Force and its Work’, p. 26. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Paci-N71334.html>

Monowai made some additional trips to Fiji³⁶ and also escorted other merchant ships from both Auckland and Wellington.

Life on board wasn't all plain sailing. *Monowai's* company included ex-merchant service crew – known as T124s³⁷ – who objected strongly to saltwater showers only being provided. Eventually the navy relented and arranged for freshwater showers.

On another occasion, a group of T124 stokers failed to return from leave on time, seriously delaying the ship's departure. Stokers being trained on the *Philomel*³⁸ were instead brought on board to make up for those who had not returned³⁹. (Jim is not quite sure when this took place but thinks it was over Christmas/New Year 1940).

In February 1941, while *Monowai* was undergoing its first refit, Jim enjoyed a week's leave at home in Christchurch. "My folks were very pleased [to see me], especially my mother who had suffered gravely in the First World War with my father overseas and two children [to care for] ... He was badly wounded in the second Battle of the Somme and sent home on a hospital ship. So my mother had been through the mill before the Second World War and she now had two sons in the navy."

After this refit the *Monowai* was tasked with transporting a small detachment of Australian troops and stores to Nauru Island. They sailed from Auckland on 27 February, escorting the *Awatea* as far as Suva, where they arrived on 2 March. The next day, *Monowai* left Suva, in company with two Norwegian freighters and arrived off Ocean Island five days later. The *Monowai* then proceeded to Nauru Island, where troops and stores were landed. The next ten days were spent on patrol between the two islands before returning to Suva.⁴⁰ Jim remembers this journey with interest. Two months earlier, a German raider had bombarded Nauru's phosphate mining operation, seriously damaging phosphate supplies to both New Zealand and Australia.⁴¹ Phosphate was badly needed for both munitions and fertiliser. The Norwegian freighters were

³⁶ One of these trips, which departed from Napier, was wreathed in secrecy. After leaving Auckland, the crew were not told initially where they were headed and no-one was allowed ashore on arrival bar the guards on the jetty. "I don't think even the postman went ashore. That was an interesting episode."

³⁷ 'Following an Admiralty scheme, arrangements had been made for the entry of crews of requisitioned trawlers and other merchant vessels taken over for naval purposes, under what was termed a T.124 agreement. This was, in effect, a form of group entry on special conditions, differing in many important respects from a normal naval enlistment.' From 'Medical Services in New Zealand and the Pacific' by T. Stout and M. Duncan, Historical Publications Branch, 1958, Wellington. Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945*, p. 164. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2PMed-pt3-c3-1.html>

³⁸ 'New Zealand's first warship, HMS *Philomel* formed the core of the country's naval forces during the First World War ... At the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, *Philomel* was still in use as a training ship at the naval base. The ship housed volunteers for naval service from 1939 until 1941, when a training base was commissioned on Motuihe Island.' From 'NZ's first warship', <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/hms-philomel> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 18-Aug-2014.

³⁹ Jim says the errant stokers eventually appeared in Wellington, where they were given the option of leaving the navy or signing a new agreement.

⁴⁰ Source: From 'The Royal New Zealand Navy' by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 152-153. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c11.html>

⁴¹ 'The *Komet* then steamed to Nauru Island, where, in the early morning of 27 December, she bombarded and wrecked the phosphates plant, including the great cantilever loading structure and the oil storage tanks ... The German raiders' attacks on Nauru Island and its shipping were, in effect, their greatest success in the Pacific, since they seriously affected the volume and continuity of the supplies of phosphates to New Zealand and Australia and, in less degree, to Britain.' Ibid, p. 146-7.

painstakingly loaded with phosphate by barge and lighter to get supplies flowing again.⁴² “All this was necessary as the farmers in New Zealand were out of fertiliser and urgent supply was called for by the New Zealand Government.”

A few months later, *Monowai* returned to Ocean Island, arriving there on 3 June to spend most of the month protecting ships loading at Ocean and Nauru Islands.⁴³

Another memorable voyage was to Fanning Island to relieve the garrison there. Now called Tabuaeran, this island atoll had strategic importance as it had long been used by the British as a central Pacific telephone relay and cable station⁴⁴. Jim, who was “very ginger haired and fair” was relieved on that occasion not to be allowed into the sea-boats that were landing through the surf. It was recognised that the fair-skinned crew members would have got badly sunburnt. The *Monowai* had accompanied the *Aorangi* to Fanning Island (and prior to that, to Suva), where the latter ship landed relief troops and stores for the garrison before going on to Vancouver. “We went with *Aorangi* as far as just outside Pearl Harbour. [Then] we came back and stopped at Christmas Island and picked up two royal naval officers from there. Whatever they were doing, nobody was told⁴⁵.”

From there, *Monowai* travelled back to Fiji to relieve New Zealand troops.

Jim also recalls making a trip to Tahiti to collect the first group of Free French troops going to the Middle East. “We took them from Tahiti ... and then onto Noumea where we dropped the troops. The officers and non-commissioned officers were all French Foreign Legionnaires.⁴⁶

“We also did a journey up through the Marshalls and Carolines for Admiralty plotting the Japanese radio stations that were up there. This was before the Japanese came into the war.⁴⁷”

Monowai was in dock on the night of the attack on Pearl Harbour, (7 December 1941), having gone there the previous month to get repainted. Once in dock, the ship’s crew had been split into three watches allowing everyone on board to take around 12 days leave. Jim got his leave in November and was home in Christchurch at the same time as his brother. “So my parents were very pleased.”

He was back on board at the time the news broke about Pearl Harbour, so he remembers being roused out of his bunk in the middle of the night to be told about the attack. The re-paint job was now put on fast-track. “They rushed around and put all the

⁴² As guests of the British Phosphate Commission on Nauru Island, Jim says he and half a dozen other sailors had the unusual experience of being allowed into the island’s Chinese opium dens; the labour on the island was apparently all Chinese.

⁴³ She returned to Auckland on 10 July. Ibid, p. 155.

⁴⁴ From ‘Australian Postal History & Social Philately - Melbourne to Fanning Island Wrapper’. <http://www.auspostalhistory.com/articles/12.php>

⁴⁵ Jim believes they were there to survey the island for possible military use. “The Lieutenant Commander gave us a very interesting talk on the destruction and surrender of the French fleet at Oran, North Africa. He had been the Intelligence Officer to the Admiral in charge of the British Naval Force.”

⁴⁶ “The *Monowai* returned to Suva for fuel and then went to Tahiti, where she embarked some 300 local Free French troops for New Caledonia. From Noumea she proceeded to a rendezvous off East Cape where on 6 May she met the *Rimutaka*, bound from Wellington to Panama, and escorted her a full day’s steaming to the eastward.’ From ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945, p. 153. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c11.html>

⁴⁷ Jim says this took place after the *Monowai*’s second trip to Nauru Island in mid-1941, well before the attack on Pearl Harbour, with marine radar used to plot the stations.

corks back in and took her out of dock the next morning. Everybody was to the fore to paint her; she had already been cleaned - she just had to be painted out of dock.

“We got out of dock and of course from then on everything was a shambles really.”

By this time, New Zealand’s naval forces were no longer simply a division of the Royal Navy. Cap tallies had changed from HMS *Monowai* to HMNZS *Monowai* as the ship was now part of the Royal New Zealand Navy, formed on 1 October 1941 with the consent of King George VI⁴⁸.

The year 1941 ended sadly for the crew of *Monowai*. On 30 December, while on gunnery practice in the Hauraki Gulf, the six-inch gun at port side fwd. had a hang fire and when the charge ignited the explosion blew the breech block off and into the gun’s crew.⁴⁹ “It killed four, took the leg off one⁵⁰ and seriously wounded a couple of others.” It was a bad accident, but Surgeon Eric McPhail⁵¹ impressed Jim with how he responded so calmly to the carnage. “He came out of it with high honours ... I was on the range finder and so I didn’t see it, but people that were up on the fo’c’s’le where the gun blew out said he just came up and he said, ‘we will do that, that and that and so be it.’ The gun was ultimately replaced ...[and] there was a board of enquiry⁵².”

The looming threat from Japan ensured Allied recognition of Fiji’s key strategic importance in the South Pacific. Strong defences had been built up in the Suva peninsula, in the Namaka area, Nandi airfield, and Navula Passage. In November 1941, New Zealand had begun to build three major airfields in the Namaka area, the first to be ready in mid-January 1942.

By early January, *Monowai* was on her way to Fiji as escort, along with *Leander*, to a convoy of troop ships consisting of the *Rangatira*, *Wahine*, and *Matua*. By the middle of the month *Monowai* and *Taroona*, both carrying troops, had left Auckland again, bound for Fiji.

It was to be an eventful return trip. After landing troops and refuelling, *Monowai* began the voyage back to Auckland but was only eight miles out of Suva when two almost simultaneous explosions⁵³ were heard, leaving in their wake two columns of black smoke near the ship’s port side. Action stations were ordered just before a submarine was spotted breaking the surface ‘abaft the port beam at a distance of 7000 yards’. The *Taroona*, then travelling from Lautoka to Suva, also sighted the submarine, which opened fire. *Monowai* responded with broadsides from her four port 6-inch guns, with the salvos straddling the submarine. The first rounds fell short, while two shots

⁴⁸ From ‘Naval Reserve History’, section entitled ‘The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve’.

<http://www.navy.mil.nz/np/naval-reserve/naval-reserve-history/default.htm>

⁴⁹ This is Jim’s description of what happened. The incident is also recalled in an online history, which states ‘the No.1 gun, port side, exploded when the breech block was accidentally opened just as the gun was being fired.’ See ‘P&O Heritage - Ship Fact Sheet’ *Razmak* (1925) later *Monowai*. Base data at 6 February 1925. Last amended April 2009,

<http://www.poheritage.com/Content/Mimsy/Media/factsheet/93818MONOWAI-1925pdf.pdf>

⁵⁰ Jim says the rating who lost his leg was the son of a Mr Sherwood, who was the private secretary to the Minister of Defence Fred Jones. “They were all on the Limited Express that night for Auckland.”

⁵¹ More info is available online at the National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy, entry on ‘McPhail Surgeon Captain E.S.’, <http://navymuseum.co.nz/mcphail-surgeon-captain-e-s/>

⁵² Jim was a messenger to this board of enquiry. “The evidence pointed to the fact that the guns were so old and the breech worker was ultimately I think responsible for what happened.”

⁵³ Jim remembers one very loud explosion and seeing a water spout. My source for this section is from ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 258-259.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c17.html>

then fell close to it. The submarine then dived out of sight. *Monowai* made for safety at full speed heading for the Mbengga Passage, closely followed by the *Taroona*. This narrow passage was unfamiliar to the crew but they were able to successfully navigate through it before resuming their journey to Auckland.

Jim, who has researched this encounter since the war, says documentation shows the Japanese submarine crew thought they had a large passenger ship in their sights. “The torpedo they fired missed because we were starting to turn and it went off in our wake.”

Around this time, troops and supplies from the United States began to flow into the South Pacific. Washington allocated naval forces to the Anzac Area, under the strategic direction of the U.S. with Australia and New Zealand assisting. New Zealand’s two light cruisers *Achilles* and *Leander*, along with *Monowai*, were to be this country’s contribution to the new Anzac Force⁵⁴.

“We were part of the Anzac Squadron, purely as a supply ship and we used to carry all sorts of stuff around the Pacific to Fiji, Noumea, over to Sydney.”

Jim remembers *Monowai* escorting two old coal burning ships “loaded to the gunnels with ammunition” for the American Navy from Melbourne to Fremantle⁵⁵. There was a black-out when they arrived at the port city, which was “chock-a-block” with servicemen. From there they went back to Melbourne where they collected supplies for the heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia*, then in Noumea. “[So] We went to Noumea, tied up alongside *Australia* and were unloading supplies when the sirens went and there were Japanese planes in the sky ... As far as I could gather no bombs were dropped. [I think] they would have been reconnaissance, but everybody went to action stations.” *Monowai* cut free of the *Australia* and then steamed into the harbour and stayed there until the all clear was given.⁵⁶

Prior to the Japanese coming into the war, Jim says volunteers had been called for from the *Monowai* to serve in Singapore⁵⁷ and 12 were selected to travel via Sydney to Singapore. The collapse of Singapore in February 1942 effectively stranded them there but two, from Christchurch, managed to escape via motor-boat. “As they went out of Singapore...there were some Japanese destroyers coming in and fortunately for them they laid a smoke screen. So they got out under the smoke screen and once they got into the islands, of course, they were away.⁵⁸ The remainder were taken prisoners of war.”

⁵⁴ For full details on the ships making up the Anzac Force, go to Ibid, pp. 259-260.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c17.html> Jim recalls that *Monowai*’s two fo’c’s’le guns were also upgraded once the Pacific War had begun. The new “MK12” guns were automated, easier to handle and had a longer range.

⁵⁵ Two old American four-stack destroyers were also in the escort – Jim says one was the *John D Ford* – but after striking heavy seas in the Australian Bight the destroyers pulled out and went into Adelaide leaving *Monowai* as sole escort through to Fremantle. The cargo of ammunition included depth charges and torpedo warheads.

⁵⁶ Jim recollects that their main cargo at that time – “because the Australian Navy was dry” – was beer!

⁵⁷ Churchill had promised Australia and NZ that Britain would defend Asia if Japan declared war and the Singapore Naval Base was the focus of its defensive strategy. However, the defence of Singapore was effectively relegated below that of Britain, the Middle East and Russia so that by the time reinforcements were available it was too late. Source: *The Fall of Fortress Singapore: Churchill's Role and the Conflicting Interpretations* by Rab Paterson, Sophia International Review,

<http://fla-sir.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/1/2471121/sir30-paterson.pdf>

⁵⁸ Jim heard the story from two of the men involved, who were in his mess: Herbie Hutchinson and Bob Morten. From Singapore, they made their way to Java and eventually to Fremantle where they went ashore. “Bob Morten was in a bad way, he went across in an ambulance train to Melbourne. Somebody

Reflecting on *Monowai's* wartime contribution, Jim says he feels the importance of this hardworking armed merchant cruiser has been forgotten because of “the glamour” accorded to *Achilles* and *Leander* at the time. “[Yet] all would have been in desperate straits without her and the [predominantly] New Zealand crew, notwithstanding the other ships.”

Anti-submarine duties

In June 1942, volunteers were being sought to join the ASDIC⁵⁹ Anti-submarine Division, which had a training base in Auckland. Jim volunteered along with about half a dozen other men from *Monowai*. After having hearing tests, they were despatched to St Mary's Bay RNVR headquarters to be trained as ASDIC operators.

While they completed the six week course, they stayed in various homes in Herne Bay. Jim and three other trainees were boarded with a widow in Herne Bay Road. At the end of the six weeks, Jim qualified as an ASDIC operator AS1.

The commanding officer of this still fairly new and improvised school was Christchurch-born Lieutenant R.V. Berry, who had joined the RNZNVR in 1933. Within a few months he would be appointed Officer-in-Charge of ‘the Naval Electrical School’ on the Petone foreshore, so named to disguise its activities as an anti-submarine training establishment.⁶⁰

After training, Jim was drafted to HMNZS *Rata*⁶¹, a minesweeper working out of Wellington, which he recalls had little in the way of harbour defence at the time. “The harbour defence loop hadn't been laid and these minesweepers were deployed at Worsler Bay with their ASDIC beam right across the harbour doing twenty four hour watch as harbour protection for the Wellington port⁶².”

With its adequate holds and bunk space, Jim remembers *Rata* as having been “a very comfortable ship” though the head of the harbour could be “very rough” some nights. Jim's position was as one of the watch-keeping ASDIC operators.

The mine sweeping operation worked round the clock by having a relief made every evening at 5pm between *Rata* and another coal burning vessel, *South Sea*. “The ship relieved went to sea and did a sweep from the heads out to the one hundred fathom mark. A patrol came in the next day whilst the ship was at anchor in Worsler Bay and

found Herbie Hutchinson on the streets of Fremantle and he came aboard...” Bob Morten was later picked up from Melbourne and both men were returned to New Zealand.

⁵⁹ ASDIC was an underwater detection device used by Allied escorts during the war. The Americans called it ‘sonar’. From ‘Fighting the U-boats – Weapons and Technologies: ASDIC/Sonar’, <http://uboat.net/allies/technical/asdic.htm>

⁶⁰ From ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 209,

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c14.html> Also from this school, Jim remembers Chief Chapman RN and Petty Officer Holder, also RN, who was the SDI Submarine Detector Instructor. “[They] had been brought out from England especially, the two of them, to run the school.”

⁶¹ Jim says this coal burning ship had worked as a coastal boat between Nelson and Wellington and the West Coast before the war and had carried coal.

⁶² However, plans were in train to boost Wellington's naval defences around this time to include anti-submarine fixed defences in the main channel, an extension of an anti-boat piled boom to cover the western side of the outer harbour, a net boom with gate and gate vessel, anti-torpedo nets to protect the floating dock and Aotea Quay, anti-torpedo baffles to guard the other wharves, as well as shore stations. The erection of a radar station at the harbour entrance was also recommended. This scheme was approved in War Cabinet on 25 April 1942. From *Ibid*, p. 206.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c14.html>

just kept the surveillance going. We stayed there all the next day while the other one went in to provision or coal and then it would relieve at five o'clock at night again."

At one point, Jim recalls *Rata* went to Picton for a week to carry out a full ASDIC survey in Queen Charlotte Sound to assess if it could be used as a potential fleet anchorage for the Americans, but it was deemed not practicable.⁶³

Towards the end of November, Jim left *Rata* to attend the new training school in Petone, which had been set up in yacht clubrooms on the foreshore. This was now the main anti-submarine school. It had 'an attack teacher, asdic sets for demonstration purposes, procedure teachers, a cinema, loop instruction and echo-sounding equipment'⁶⁴.

"The school was brand new, the equipment was new ... Berry had been promoted to Lieutenant Commander⁶⁵ ... It [trained] everybody from ASDICs through to those to be employed on harbour loops and officers being trained for ASDIC control officers."

In the course of training⁶⁶, he was accommodated at some flats on the main street where meals were prepared by Wrens (Women's Royal Naval Service).

Afterwards he was sent to Auckland to work as a relief Higher Submarine Detector (HSD) on various ships. Often he found himself aboard the various ships of the 25th Minesweeping Flotilla⁶⁷ including four coal burning trawlers named after Scottish isles: *Sanda*, *Scarba*, *Inchkeith* and *Killegray*. On one occasion, when Jim was on HMNZS *Scarba*⁶⁸ as a relief HSD, the four minesweepers were despatched to clear a minefield that had been laid by the British Navy for the Americans across the mouth of the Bay of Islands. "There was one interesting incident on the *Scarba* where a mine got jammed in the cutter somehow. If it hadn't been for the action of the stoker on the winch, we would have had the backside blown off. It exploded, he kicked across over, the sweep ran out and the mine went off. It destroyed all the crockery in the wardroom and upset bunks and all sorts of things down there but we got away with it okay. Of course it blew the sweep apart."

These minesweepers had to carry their own water and Jim recalls trips up to Opuia in the Bay of Islands to get water. Coal would also be loaded on at Opuia from railway wagons backed onto the wharf. An express train from Whangarei would deliver any

⁶³ Jim says the survey was not very successful: there was too much water movement so it had to be disbanded.

⁶⁴ From 'The Royal New Zealand Navy' by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, p. 209, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c14.html>

⁶⁵ Jim says Chapman and Holder – the staff who'd trained him at the Auckland school – were also at Petone.

⁶⁶ He completed a Higher Submarine Detector (HSD) course over some six to eight weeks.

⁶⁷ On 14 November 1940 the Naval Board directed that the minesweepers were to be organised as follows: First (NZ) Minesweeping Flotilla – mobile: *HM Ships Matai* (Senior Officer Minesweepers), *Muritai*, *Rata*, *Gale*, *Puriri*, and *Coastguard* (danlayer). Port Minesweepers – First M/S Group (Auckland): *HM Ships Wakakura*, *Humphrey*, and *Duchess*. Second M/S Group (Wellington): *South Sea* and *Futurist*. Third M/S Group: *James Cosgrove* and *Thomas Currell*. On 23 December 1940 the First (NZ) M/S Flotilla was designated as the 25th Minesweeping Flotilla. This designation was retained through the war, though the vessels of the flotilla changed from time to time. From 'The Royal New Zealand Navy' by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, pp. 177-178, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c12.html>

⁶⁸ These four minesweeping trawlers, purchased for New Zealand, carried out convoy duties from California to Hawaii on the way out to Auckland where they arrived 4 August 1942. HMNZS *Scarba* was commanded by Lieutenant Commander Peter Phipps. From 'WWII: Vice Admiral Sir Peter Phipps KBE DSC VRD', <http://www.navy.mil.nz/np/naval-reserve/naval-reserve-history/hipps-reserve-hero.htm>

required relief supplies. “Whilst sweeping the coast there, the routine was ... to go out and sweep just past Tiritiri Matangi right out around Cape Rodney...We also used to go into Whangarei sometimes and spend the night in there and then out to the one hundred fathom mark.”

In July 1943, the *Leander* was torpedoed during a battle with the Japanese in the Solomon Islands⁶⁹. Two new Harbour Defence Motor Launches (HDMLs)⁷⁰ were sent up the coast to meet the damaged ship as she came limping home. Jim was assigned to one of these launches as an HSD along with two other operators to try out the ASDIC gear.

“We ran into some rough sea coming in. The *Leander*, of course, had a huge hole in one side and was listing a wee bit but she could keep a good speed going. We couldn’t keep up in the weather so we just dropped out behind. That was an interesting episode.”

Later that year Jim was sent back to Petone for a month’s refresher course at the ASDIC School before returning to Auckland for further relief duties.

He was then appointed as leading HSD on the minesweeper and anti-submarine patrol vessel HMNZS *Muritai*, which Jim says carried out a lot of shallow draft minesweeping⁷¹. Much of the work involved sweeping from Tiritiri Matangi to Cape Rodney. They would spend the night in Kawau before returning to Auckland. “We were also being used to take seamen classes from Tamaki out for a week. Our captain, our skipper, used to delight in taking them out into a bit of rough water out past Little Barrier.” The queasy trainees often turned down their allocated rum rations – “so there was a big surplus of rum!”

By 1944, the decision was made to remove many of the mines laid around the New Zealand coast. *Muritai* was involved in mine-lifting operations in the Bay of Plenty.

Training to be an officer

Towards the end of March 1944 Jim was recommended for a Fleet Commission Warrant (CW) to become a Navy officer.

“I didn’t know what CW was really. It was explained to me that this was a recommendation for a commission to go from the lower deck ... I didn’t think there was really much chance, but I said, ‘Yes, okay, I will have a go’.”⁷²

Once the papers had been signed, Jim was told to go home for a week and then report back to base in Auckland. There he was told he would be going overseas for training. He and another man from the base, Red Greenbrook⁷³ then travelled to Wellington and south to Dunedin⁷⁴ to join a merchant ship to England.

⁶⁹ From ‘Pacific attack’, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/hmnzs-leander/pacific-attack> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 20-Dec-2012.

⁷⁰ These launches were used to investigate possible radar contacts and suspicious sightings around New Zealand. They conducted anti-submarine searches. From ‘The Royal New Zealand Navy’ by S.D. Waters, Historical Publications Branch, 1956, Wellington, Part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, pp. 220, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c14.html> Jim says the launches were only newly arrived from Canada at that time and trials had just been carried out.

⁷¹ “She had been a ferry boat that ran from Wellington City to Day’s Bay before the war. A twin-screw steam ship [with] good accommodation on board.”

⁷² There was a definite hierarchy in the Navy. In 1939 there was a reluctance to consider promotions from ‘lower deck regulars’ and initially they were only granted in small numbers. ‘... those of the RNRV [were] regarded as vastly inferior to ‘real’ officers of the regular Royal Navy [and] had wavy stripes and hence were known as the ‘wavy navy’. From ‘In Which They Served – The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War’ by Brian Lavery, 2008, p. 29.

⁷³ A leading stoker.

⁷⁴ “In Christchurch, he saw his parents and girlfriend, Shirley, at the railway station.

They spent three days in Dunedin before being taken on board a ship called the *Port Wyndham* at Port Chalmers. “She was loaded to the gunnels, a very modern ship [with a] diesel engine [and] a cruising speed of somewhere between sixteen and eighteen knots. We were to sail ... direct for England without any escort⁷⁵.” Jim and Red were allocated a cabin. Jim remembers the voyage to England as having been “a delightful passage”.

On a warm day in 1944 they arrived in Liverpool and were put on a train that night for the Devonport naval barracks. Initially he went into the main barracks at HMS *Drake*⁷⁶, then a CW section for about a week before being directed to St Budeaux camp.

“While at St Budeaux, we used to have to march to the barracks every day through a little village which had a pub in it, but we weren’t allowed in the pub. We just had to march past it...In the barracks we were vitted in a place called ‘Jago’s Mansion’ ... The food was absolutely shocking.”

Training at St Budeaux followed a familiar routine, covering areas such as signals, discipline, seamanship and boat work.

At the end of training he was sent to Portsmouth “to pick up the draft”. He was there for a fortnight, doing some more training before travelling by train, truck and ferry to the HMS *Raleigh* training barracks at Plymouth’s Tor Point.

Jim says *Raleigh* was where all navy recruits went for initial training. “The upper yardsmen’s school⁷⁷ was there as well as the CW school.” He completed a week-long course at the CW school, referred to as the Admiral’s Board. Classes and interviews covered a number of areas, including discipline, signals, seamanship, power of command and psychology. Base training commanders conducted the interviews. Jim remembers feeling particularly nervous before one of his interviews with a senior officer, a seamanship commander with a hard reputation. However, the interview went well after it transpired that the commander was very close to a New Zealander called Lieutenant Commander Sealy⁷⁸; Jim had also met Sealy while under training on the *Wakakura*. “So we had quite a chat about him as [it transpired that] Sealy had rescued him off Freetown after his destroyer had been torpedoed and [we then had] a lengthy chat too about New Zealand. My interview was longer than anybody else and I came out with a smile on my face.”

One of the more difficult aspects of the training was power of command tests. Men would be formed up in two lines, each with a number on their arm. “They would call out your number and you would have to go in the front and they would say, ‘well, march the team up there, turn them, bring them back, do a half right’ or various drilling things. If you showed any weakness, they would set you off in a direction in amongst all the GIs and everything on this big parade ground. They were all shouting and yelling at the same time and you had to compete with them.” The tests were all designed to reveal how well men could cope under pressure.

⁷⁵ Jim recalls that *Port Wyndham* was armed with “a four inch QF [quick-firing] gun” mounted on the stern and there was also a gun’s crew.

⁷⁶ ‘Her Majesty’s Naval Base, Devonport (HMNB Devonport), is one of three operating bases in the United Kingdom for the Royal Navy ... From 1934 until the early 21st century the Naval Barracks on the site was named HMS *Drake*.’ From ‘HMNB Devonport’, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMNB_Devonport

⁷⁷ Jim says the upper yardsmen’s school was made up of ratings; lower deckers who were in the Royal Navy and coming through from the RN to get commissions and to do a short service course at Dartmouth.

⁷⁸ An oral history of Rear Admiral EC Thorne also recalls this man. He mentions having done a course at Portsmouth where ‘Lieutenant David Sealy’ was Assistant Course Officer. From ‘RNZN Communicators Association – Rear Admiral EC Thorne, Oral History’, <http://rnzncomms.org/memories/thorne/>

Jim well remembers the particular test he was set one day. They called him out and he was told to teach the squad how to mow a lawn. “You had to mimic that you had a lawnmower and tell them how to mow the lawn and you were pushing an imaginary lawnmower across the parade ground and they would just tell you to resume the rank. So they really tested you. They gave you not only power of command. There were [other tests too]: getting over a ravine with two planks and a barrel and all this sort of thing.”

The final stage was to appear before the Admiral’s Board, conducted in a long room crammed with instructor commanders; various officers; and psychologists, all presided over by the Admiral himself. (Jim remembers he was “a little short fellow with a World War One pork-pie hat on the table in front of him.”) After marching to the end of table, saluting, taking his hat off and saying his name, rank and number, Jim was told he was being sent to *King Alfred*. This was the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve officer training establishment at Hove in East Sussex, near Brighton⁷⁹. Back at the dormitory, he was told to get his kit bag and hammock and report to the store to return a lot of his gear. He was then given a travel warrant and a week’s leave and delivered to the railway station.

Jim took his leave at Capernwray Hall. He had found this stately home during an earlier period of leave, not long after arriving in England. Initially he had gone to London on leave, but with flying bombs regularly landing it soon proved a little too unnerving there. He decided to move on from the Victoria League Club (recommended by the New Zealand Forces Club), where he and Red, the stoker from New Zealand, were staying. They went to the office and asked if they could recommend somewhere to stay outside of London and were told ‘Capernwray Hall in Lancashire⁸⁰’. He and the stoker packed their bags and travelled north by train. They were met at the station and then taken to Capernwray Hall, an old English stone mansion, with a large farm.

“We were told in no uncertain terms that all badges had to be dropped [and] people were to be known only by their Christian names. A Canadian captain [was] there... Only people from the Dominions or colonies could stay. There were a couple of Aussie air force people, Greenbrook⁸¹ [the stoker] and myself...[It was] a delightful place with good accommodation. The meals were absolutely magnificent because the farm had been left with a gamekeeper and a couple of farmers or labourers ... We lived very well. You could go anywhere you liked. They had bikes...the nearest pub was about three miles away at a crossroad. We used to ride down to the pub and have a few beers. The grounds [were] extensive.”

Jim often stayed at Capernwray Hall during periods of leave.

Returning from leave after the Admiral’s Board, Jim travelled to *King Alfred*⁸² at Hove where he was assigned to Frobisher Division. He says most of the 30 or so men in this division were university educated and ranged in age from 18 through to their late 20s. “They were going to be interpreters, intelligence officers, all those specialist types of

⁷⁹ See ‘A History of H.M.S. KING AFLRED’,

http://www.royalnavyresearcharchive.org.uk/King_Alfred_1.htm#.VK8QyGdxncs

⁸⁰ The history of this stately home is at this link:

<http://www.capernwray.org.uk/Capernwray.php?pid=43>

⁸¹ Jim says Red married one of the maids at Capernwray Hall. “Greenbrook unfortunately died many years ago. She is still living in the same cottage that they bought with a rehab loan in Devonport, Auckland.”

⁸² Following naval tradition, the training base had been commissioned as a ship on 11 September 1939. It operated out of a former leisure centre. Staff and trainees were expected to use nautical terms while there, such as referring to floors as ‘decks’. From ‘In Which They Served – The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War’ by Brian Lavery, 2008, p. 23-28.

groups.” Jim recalls one other New Zealander there, a man by the name of Miller who was a leading telegraphist⁸³.

The team of officers included the divisional officer, a gallant submariner from HMS *Regent*⁸⁴; a gunnery officer with a soft spot for New Zealanders; and various other officers covering signals, navigation and other disciplines.⁸⁵

On the waterfront at Hove, *King Alfred's* facilities⁸⁶ included a covered swimming pool converted into dormitories, a cadet's mess room, a bar, parade room and training rooms. A front administration block was occupied by officers. Each day started with a march past parade, taken by cadets along the waterfront promenade.

Jim found the second of the six-week training blocks there more interesting because it became focussed on navigation and ship handling, which was done at Shoreham-by-Sea. “They had all types of ships down there ... You had to handle them by issuing orders to a helmsman, you weren't allowed to con it yourself.”

Some of the top tailors of the day were called in to measure up the men of Frobisher Division for their uniforms. Jim remembers being measured up for a sub-lieutenant's uniform. Of course, all the old uniforms had to go and Jim remembers feeling sad about having to part with the hat box he'd first been kitted out with in the RNVR. Once he'd been fully kitted out and fitted with a new uniform, he was given a big green suitcase to put it all in and a week's leave.

“And so, as a bare arsed sub-lieutenant temporary acting probationary⁸⁷ I went ashore and caught a train. Now, of course, I was travelling first class and not third class. I stayed a night in London and then went on to Capernwray Hall to spend my leave there.”

Back from leave, Jim spent another week to 10 days at *King Alfred* before being told that he, along with the other New Zealander, three South Africans and an Australian, were going to do “a knife and fork course” at Greenwich. After another week's leave, he reported to Greenwich. “Our stay there was very pleasant: it was a great place and you didn't really have to get dressed up. You didn't do a lot of drill.” Jim remembers night watch duties and also ARP duty, patrolling the buildings to make sure no lights were showing. “The sirens went night and day because the V2s and V1s were dropping...We were told by Commodore Agar, VC⁸⁸ that we were not to go into any of the hotels within a mile of Greenwich because there were a lot of air raid shelters and people that were working in greater London and living in these air raid shelters - many of them were

⁸³ Jim says he later became headmaster of a high school in Gisborne.

⁸⁴ “His name was Lamont. We were told he went ashore and helped the consulate people to get down from Belgrade I presume to the coast and take them out from underneath the Italians.” A history of this submarine is online at: http://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-12SS-03R-HMS_Regent.htm

⁸⁵ Jim also recalls a Captain Pelly – “a World War One man, a four ring captain, Royal Navy.” Captain John Pelly commanded HMS *King Alfred* throughout the war and was a regular naval officer who had served on battleships in the First World War and training ships in the 1920s. From ‘In Which They Served – The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War’ by Brian Lavery, 2008, p. 25.

⁸⁶ Prior to the commissioning of HMS *King Alfred*, the site had a partly completed municipal swimming pool and leisure centre next door, which could be adapted for training. From ‘In Which They Served – The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War’ by Brian Lavery, 2008, p. 23.

⁸⁷ Trainee officers over 20 had the rank of ‘Probationary Temporary Acting Sub-Lieutenant’. One recruit of the day couldn't help but admire the way in which the Admiralty kept its options open – ‘three ways of getting rid of one!’ From *Ibid*, p. 30

⁸⁸ He was President and Captain of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, with the rank of Commodore. His interesting war history can be read online at: http://www.oldframinghamian.com/images/articles/CAPTAINAUGUSTUSGUSWILLINGTONSHELTONA_GARVCSORN1902-03.pdf

carved into the hill under Greenwich Hill – [and] they used the hotels for their evening meal and their entertainment.”

Ship handling was carried out on the Thames and Jim remembers working on board two well-appointed launches which had been commandeered by the Navy. “There were a lot of docks and if you happened to be at the right tide there were overseas ships coming and going ... It was quite an interesting exercise.”

After Greenwich, Jim was sent to a navigation school at Hove, learning the finer points of astronavigation and coastal navigation.

The war in Europe ended while Jim was at Hove. “I saw out my VE Day in a pub somewhere in Brighton and I came back to *King Alfred* and probably spent the early hours of the morning at the wardroom bar.”

Jim’s naval career continued nonetheless and he was promoted to Temporary Sub-Lieutenant. After Hove, he was appointed as the pilot to a newly built Landing Ship Tank (LST)⁸⁹, which he describes as having been a large, well-appointed transport ferry. The ship’s company had bunks, which Jim says was unusual in Royal Navy ships. The captain, Lieutenant Commander Jimmy Wright RNR⁹⁰, was “an excellent navigator and a thorough gentleman”. Jim joined this ship at Blyth, north of Newcastle-on-Tyne. The ship was then nearing completion.

Jim was on board his ship when it was commissioned with a crew from Chatham.

“We went out and did our trials – not only sea trials but also gunnery trials. We sailed from there and by this time the Far East War ended ... We were supposed to load and go to the Far East but the war collapsed, thanks goodness. So we trundled off around the top of Scotland ... and down to the Clyde.”

They were there for about a month before being informed they were going to Southampton to load air force personnel to go to Greece.

Jim was still on board the LST in mid-November when a visiting commander asked him what he was doing aboard the ship. In August, unbeknownst to Jim, an Admiralty Fleet Order had been issued saying all New Zealanders were to be discharged ashore for passage home. The skipper was under sailing orders to go to Southampton, so rather than waiting for a relief to arrive, Jim stayed on board. “We sailed down the Irish Sea. We had to be very careful [as] the minesweepers were working in the Irish Sea sweeping up mines and there were quite a few mines floating around ... They arrived at Southampton and went up on the hard and alongside us was a sister ship and she was going to go with the LST out to Greece.”

It took several days for Jim’s relief to arrive. He remembers at this time how some of the crew on board were able to acquire a jeep from the Americans in exchange for a carton of beer and a dozen bottles of whisky. “We were politely told that was because everything is written off in the States, nobody knew how many jeeps were there and as long as we gave whisky to the right people, we had a jeep. It then had LST 3027 written all over it and [it was] parked in the tank deck.”

Jim remembers finally leaving the LST regretfully and feeling a little worse for wear. “I had a big fat head when I left because they had sewn me up the night before.” He was put on a train for London and told he had a fortnight’s leave. Jim planned to spend it in Scotland but an Admiralty letter was waiting in London saying he had passage booked

⁸⁹ LST 3027. Listed online at <http://www.uboaat.net/allies/warships/ship/13214.html>

⁹⁰ James Alfred Wright, OBE, RNR – his record is online at: <http://www.uboaat.net/allies/commanders/2726.html>

home on HMS *Victorious*⁹¹ leaving in a week's time. So instead he stayed one last time at Capernwray Hall before returning to London and then onto Plymouth to board the *Victorious*. The worn-out aircraft carrier looked as though it had been virtually decommissioned⁹² and had only a basic Royal Navy crew. Many of the New Zealand ratings on board were roped in to work on the upper deck or down in the engine-room as stokers. Living conditions on board were basic; many of the men slept in the lifts, fore and aft. On board also were around 40 Australian Air Force men taking passage home. The flight deck was full of Seafire aircraft⁹³ bound for Singapore.

On the journey home, Jim remembers being “general dogsbody on the bridge”, running messages and helping officers of the watch.

They stopped for two nights in Gibraltar and then for three or four days in Port Said, where the ship “was patched up”. Jim says *Victorious* was in poor condition and appeared long overdue for a major refit. Christmas Day 1945 was spent at Port Said, where he recalls some of the Australian Air Force men “got on the booze”, much to the disgust of the commander and the captain⁹⁴.

Their journey took them through the Suez Canal and Jim remembers how the bridge hung right out over the road. “The army traffic and navy traffic ... were all waving to us.”

Victorious stopped at Aden and also spent several days in Colombo for more repairs after the ship had broken down. The delay meant the ship was behind schedule so did not stop in Singapore as planned but instead offloaded the Seafires at Trincomalee naval base (Sri Lanka) where barges then took them onto Singapore.

On arrival at Fremantle in Australia, the men who had caused trouble over Christmas were put ashore for disciplinary reasons, instead of staying on to Sydney as anticipated, (so forcing them to undertake an arduous journey by rail – “five days by troop train”).

Once at Sydney, Jim then had to make his way by train to Melbourne where he boarded the *Athlone Castle* to Wellington before travelling south by ferry. He was issued his final pay and commenced leave on 28 January 1946 before being discharged as a Temporary Sub-Lieutenant from the RNZN in late April.

Post-war years

Not long after his return home, Jim married his girlfriend Shirley⁹⁵, who had served with the Wrens during the war. The couple had met in 1938 but had decided not to marry until the war was over.

Jim recalls that times were difficult for ex-servicemen. He returned to work at the Farmers Co-op; they were obliged to give him employment but he felt he was not wanted there. Shirley found a job as a shorthand writer at Christchurch engineering firm Andrew and Beaven⁹⁶.

⁹¹ HMS *Victorious* was not a standard troop carrier. She was a Fleet Aircraft Carrier that had seen a lot of action. More info at: <http://www.fleetairarmarchive.net/ships/victorious.html>

⁹² In fact, *Victorious* was decommissioned in January 1947, before being re-commissioned on October 1947 as a training carrier. She underwent major reconstruction from October 1950 to January 1958. From ‘HMS *Victorious* – Fleet Aircraft Carrier’. <http://www.fleetairarmarchive.net/ships/victorious.html>

⁹³ More info on this type of aircraft is online at: http://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft_id=567

⁹⁴ Jim says they also “played up” and had a fight on New Year’s Day.

⁹⁵ Shirley Joyce Eggleston.

⁹⁶ It specialised in the production of chaff cutting and seed cleaning machinery. From ‘Our Industries – Andrews & Beaven Ltd, Engineers, Christchurch’, *Progress*, Volume III, Issue 7, 1 May 1908, Page 222. Papers Past website: <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=P19080501.2.7>

Jim had hoped to find work in the electrical trade but all the adult apprenticeships had been taken up by the time of his discharge. “[However] by a stroke of luck, I did get into the trade twelve months later.”

Taking up this opportunity meant accepting a drop in wages at a time he and Shirley were expecting their first child. Jim studied for his registration at polytechnic night classes. Their daughter, Barbara, was born on 6 August 1947. By this time the couple were renting an old cottage in Selwyn Street, which Jim remembers as being very sub-standard. “The floors [were] part earth, [there was] no bathroom, and we had a coal range and a copper for hot water.” By the time their second child was due, they had been able to get into a much more modern state house in Shirley, (though it was still being serviced by the night cart). Their son, Raymond, was born on 18 November 1949.

Jim was registered as an electrician in 1949 and initially stayed with the employer who had taken him on as a rehab trainee, mostly doing house wiring work.

His mother passed away the following year. “A broken heart, as she lived through two world wars with close kin in each.”

In 1952, feeling itchy feet and a desire for new challenges, Jim applied for a job in the Post Office workshops and was accepted. This new position came with better pay and conditions. Jim also found it rewarding because of the expansion of many of the existing exchanges at this time and the construction of new ones. He returned to polytech to complete an advanced trade certificate, being one of the first men in the Post Office to do so. By the late 1950s he had been promoted to leading electrician. Three years later, he was also the first in the Post Office to qualify for his NZ Certificate in Engineering.

In 1959 or so he was seconded to the engineering department as an engineering assistant, doing design work on all aspects of building services relating to DC power that supplied equipment, AC power, air conditioning, fire alarms, etc. Soon his skills were in demand in other centres such as Dunedin, Invercargill, Greymouth and Invercargill. Jim says the DC3 flights to Invercargill took three hours in those days, with a stop in Dunedin. “I had some hair-raising experiences in the Nor’westers but the two pound jar of oysters was most welcome to Shirl and the family.”

By the end of the 1970s, Jim had registered as a professional engineer. He had juggled study around work for many years by then. “Shirley was most tolerant and helpful when sometimes I got so frustrated ... Never mind, we now had the recompense.” Jim was promoted to assistant engineer and then to full engineer the following year. With encouragement from the district engineer, he converted to using his skills in telecommunications work. At his retirement in 1986 he was a senior divisional engineer, electrical and mechanical, for the South Island.

As part of his employment conditions, Jim joined the Post Office Association. He remembers the employee structure as being very rigid and riddled with class distinction. Clerical and professional staff rated above qualified tradesmen. This did not sit well with Jim. He and a leading electrician Jim Hewitt decided to take part in the association’s monthly meetings to try and seek change. “Progress was very slow...⁹⁷”

In 1963, Jim was elected as a delegate to attend the association’s annual conference in Wellington. That year, the principal of equal pay for equal work for women was put as a remit. Jim spoke in favour. After protracted debate the remit passed. “The Post Office Association was the first union to pass such a binding resolution in this country and, I think, in the world.”

⁹⁷ One achievement was to have linemen reclassified from labourers to tradesmen in the late 1970s.

Jim was elected to the position of Junior Vice President in 1969 and became involved in many negotiations on behalf of Post Office employees. That year, the association initiated a go slow action seeking a better deal on wages and was successful. Jim says it was significant as being the first time ever a state union had taken direct action.

Following the death of the senior vice president the following year, Jim assumed that position and was re-elected to it in 1971. He presided over the conference the following year when the president became ill. 'I had to open the conference [and] receive the dignitaries and the Ministers with no notes. What a situation. In the address to the Minister and later the Director General you were expected to line them up and push for all that we had been declined. [It was] real political stuff. I sufficed.'

In 1963, Jim's father passed away. "He was badly missed."

He was elected as PO Association President in 1973 and served for four years before returning as senior vice president in 1981. He took over the presidency again in 1984 when the incumbent stood down. Jim did not stand again the following year, feeling as though he'd had enough by then.

Negotiations often saw him going up against some of the most powerful politicians of the 1970s and '80s. He was twice ordered out of Robert Muldoon's office as part of a negotiating committee.

During those years he also travelled overseas as a delegate for Post Telegraph Telephone International (PTTI) and as a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)⁹⁸. In 1972 he attended his first PTTI conference in Bandung, Indonesia and visited Sabah and Sarawak for PTTI to investigate and report on workers' rights in the Malaysian provinces. "I did not know where to start. I spent a week there and produced a report ... To speak to those involved I had to resort to walks on the beach as I was told I was being monitored by government agents."

This was just the first of many delegations he took part in to investigate freedom of association and human rights issues. In 1977 he went to ILO meetings in Geneva to review PTTI members' rights globally to have freedom of association. "In many cases, countries only paid lip service." Places still with a long way to go included Hong Kong, the USSR, China and the Philippines.

When the decision was made to split up the Post Office, Jim was nominated for the Telecom Board and, in July 1986, was on the first establishment board. "This meant I had to retire from the Post Office as you could not be master and servant." The board became an official entity in April 1987 and later that year was asked by Minister Richard Prebble if Telecom should be sold. As Jim remembers it, after the vote came back not to sell, the chairman was sacked by the then Labour Government and the board was effectively stacked with Business Roundtable members who would vote for what the government wanted. Jim believes this was "a tragedy" given how much the Government was making out of this asset at the time⁹⁹. He was relieved to finally retire in 1991.

⁹⁸ Countries visited for various conferences and meetings included Japan, Fiji, Australia, Korea, Singapore, Norway and Sri Lanka.

⁹⁹ Alan Gibbs apparently saw it differently. "The greatest coup of my business career, the chance to make serious money," crows Alan Gibbs as he pulls off the sale of the century, taking state-owned enterprise Telecom off the government's hands in 1990. This from 'Telecom jackpot: How privatisation made fortunes' by Chris Barton, Technology columnist for the NZ Herald, 3/8/12.
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10824121

Jim says it hit him hard when Shirley passed away in 2001. The couple had enjoyed many happy years and had sometimes travelled together for Jim's overseas contracts. Jim remains a proud grandfather to two grandsons in Australia and two granddaughters in New Zealand and also has two great-grandchildren in New Zealand.

His has been a life of service, marked also by the courage to stand up not only for his personal rights, but for the rights of others. Perhaps some of that courage came as a result of going to sea on *Monowai* all those years earlier, doing what had to be done at a time when German raiders and Japanese submarines prowled the South Pacific.

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This biography was compiled in January 2015 from an interview with James Roland Calder, recorded on 31 October 2007 for the National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy and conducted by the museum's volunteer oral historian, T.K. de Castro RNZNVR (Rtd). It also draws on a few initial notes I made in November 2014 prior to Jim informing me of the 2007 interview. As well, Jim supplied me with two of his own accounts entitled 'Jim – A Brief History' and also 'HMS MONOWAI'. My thanks to Jim and the National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy for their assistance with providing this material and giving permission for me to use these sources for this biography. I have footnoted with other material to ensure this account is as accurate as possible.

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PHOTOS – SUPPLIED BY JIM CALDER

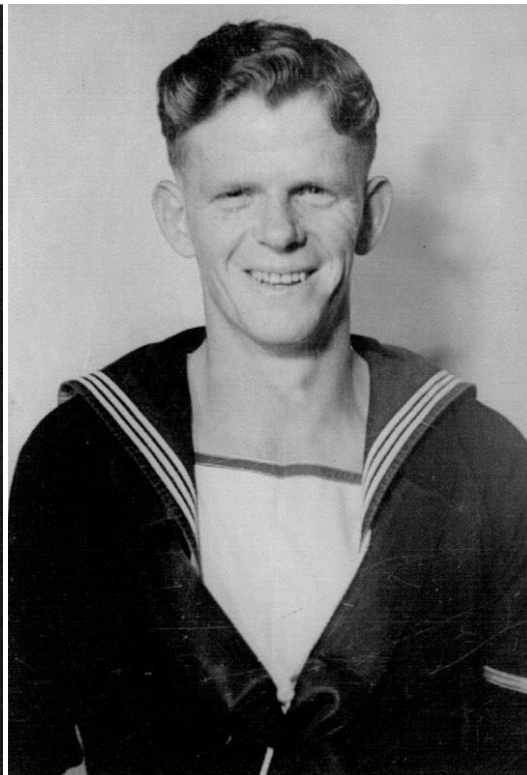
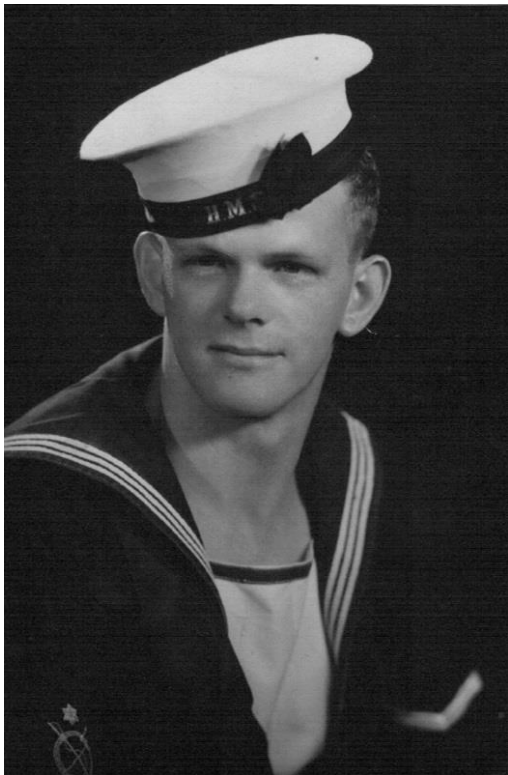
The following photos were scanned, with permission, from Jim Calder's private collection.



JIM'S FAMILY, 1941. HOME FROM NAVY LEAVE ARE BROTHERS PERCY AND JIM (BOTH STANDING). THEY ARE PICTURED WITH THEIR SISTER JEAN AND PARENTS LESLIE AND CECELIA.



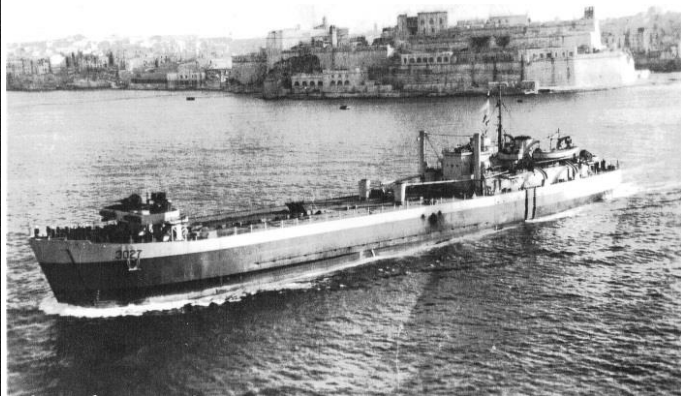
JIM'S MOTHER, CECELIA, IS STANDING AT BACK, RIGHT. SHE AND THE OTHER WOMEN PICTURED SERVED AT BURNHAM AND ADDINGTON CAMPS DURING THE WAR, MAKING TEA AND DOING VARIOUS OTHER DUTIES.



JIM CALDER IN NAVY UNIFORM, 1941



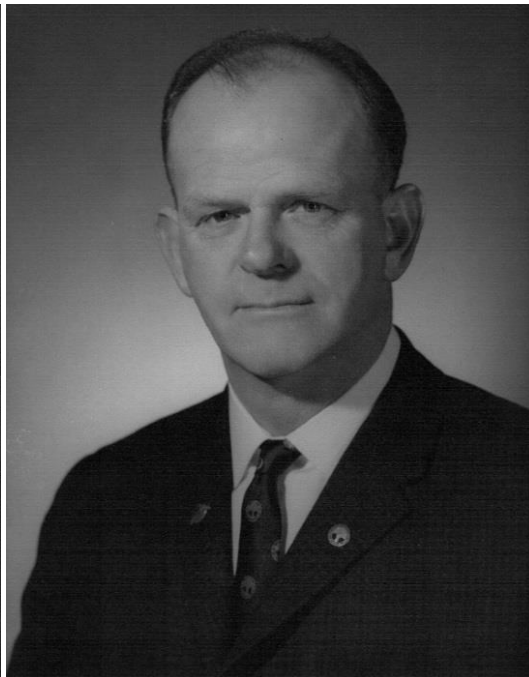
JIM'S WIFE, SHIRLEY (PICTURED), WAS A WREN IN THE WAR. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE EARLY 1940S.



PICTURED IS LANDING SHIP TANK 3027, ON WHICH JIM SERVED AS A PILOT IN 1945.



JIM CALDER, 1945, IN OFFICER'S UNIFORM



POST-WAR: PRESIDENT OF THE POST OFFICE ASSOCIATION