



# Russian Convoy Club of New Zealand Newsletter : March 2016

Dear Shipmates,

Well, Christmas has come and gone and, looking at the Hot Cross buns and chocolate eggs on sale Easter is not too far away!

Our next meeting on 24 March will be held, as usual, in the Anzac Lounge at the Petone Working Men's Club on Udy St, Petone at 1100 hours. Lunch will be served in the Bistro afterwards.

## Money makes the Club go round!

A timely reminder that subs (\$15) are due by the end of this month. Most of our income is used to purchase printing materials for the newsletter, postage and for wreaths to lay at the various commemorations we are invited to such as Anzac Day, Merchant Navy Day and at our plaque on the Wellington waterfront. In addition there is the annual cost for the website.

On the subject of finance, our Treasurer Sydney Wells, has been spending a lot of time dealing with our bank. They now charge us \$3 for each cheque deposited e.g. 15 cheques @ \$3 = \$45, a massive burden on our finances. We are therefore dealing with the IRD trying to obtain an IRD number. If this is successful the bank may forego this charge. For those who wish to pay by directly crediting our account, the club's bank number is: **ANZ Bank Wellington 01-0504-0294508-01**

Be sure to include your name on the deposit otherwise we have no idea who sent it, and advise our Treasurer Syd Wells, 23 Nevay Rd, Miramar, Wellington 6022. E-mail: [sydney.wells@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sydney.wells@xtra.co.nz) Phone 04-388-3112.

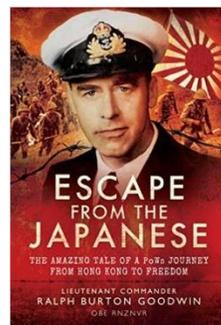
A reminder that our newsletter is always put on our website for anyone to read.

News is a two way street and a means of communicating with each other. I have now held the position of President since last November and have not yet had an e-mail, phone call or letter!

"Anybody out there?"

Five of our members received advice from the French Embassy in early December that they will be awarded the highest French decoration, the Legion d'Honneur, in early 2016. Others who qualify will presumably get theirs at a later date.

## Escape in the Far East



I've just finished reading an excellent book titled "Escape from the Japanese". Written by Lt Cdr Ralph Burton Goodwin OBE, RNZNVR the book tells of his escape from a POW camp in Hong Kong, after being incarcerated for two years, walking by night and hiding up during the day and finally meeting up with Chinese guerrillas and the British Army Aid Group who cared for him. He was in bad physical condition but finally by way of China, Ceylon and India he made it back to New Zealand. An enthralling story, the book is available from Amazon.

On 24 April this year, a group of Kiwis living in Hong Kong will be re-enacting the first four days of Goodwin's escape route across the Kowloon hills. If you know of anyone visiting Hong Kong at that time they're welcome to join the trek (it's a quite a hike and will take around five hours – not suitable for persons with special needs). Contact Derek (below) if you want more details.

Your committee was worried recently that several articles which were donated to the Levin RSA may have gone astray after its closure. These included the model of HMS Duke of York, made by our late member Bill Leitch, plus his medals and a tankard which was engraved with the journey of the NZEF from Egypt through to North Italy. Due to the much appreciated efforts of Lower Hutt RSA President Alison Sexton and Vice President Tony George we believe that these have now been located and will soon be on show in Petone.

### **HMS Foudroyant**

And now a small item of interest courtesy of a RNA branch in the UK.

A recent posted comment regarding ship's nicknames mentioned the name "Fire Hydrant" in connection with a vessel moored between Dolphin and Vernon. Those on their way ashore and return from Dolphin passed very close to it on the trip. It was always known as "Fire Hydrant" by Jack but it was HMS Foudroyant of Nelson's days and I believe a French "prize" from one of "The Little Admirals" many victories.



The legend was that Nelson's daughter Horatia was conceived on the ship. The various web sites on this vessel reveal a fascinating part of RN history that many matelots might not be aware of despite passing "the old girl" many times.

The question now: is the Foudroyant still on guard duty or has she gone the same way as much of our history, to the wreckers?

The Foudroyant played a key role in Nelson's personal and professional life in the period following victory over the French in the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798. Embroiled, against orders, in Naples and Palermo in the preservation of the "The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies", the wounded Nelson

began his adulterous love affair with Emma Hamilton. Their daughter Horatia was probably conceived on board the Foudroyant, on a cruise to Malta. The rebel Neapolitan naval commander, Commodore Francesco Caracciolo, was court marshalled for treason and sentenced to death in Foudroyant's wardroom, and her great cabin became the venue for parties that were part of Nelson and Emma's enigmatic social life. More dignified was Foudroyant's role in the capture of the only two French battleships to escape the Battle of the Nile.

Foudroyant is very much alive and well, but residing in Hartlepool (whether that's a good idea given the ship's French origins is another question!) under her first RN name of Trincomalee.

She's being restored by the same organisation that brought Warrior 1860 back from the dead in the late 80's prior to bringing her down to Pompey.

### **Service papers**

One of our members who never received his service papers when demobbed (due probably to a change of street numbers whilst serving) attempted recently to obtain a copy. After much toing and froing, mainly by snail mail, he has been advised that these have been destroyed, probably on the order of some bureaucrat in Whitehall. He was, however, sent a copy of his "Payment and Victual Ledgers". No use in deciding what ship he was on and when. Apparently a copy of your Service Certificate is available if you were in the Andrew in the late 1800's!

### **And finally**

Two junkies recently accidentally snorted curry powder instead of cocaine. Both are in hospital. One's in a korma, the other's got a dodgy tikka!

The sergeant-major growled at the young soldier: "I didn't see you at camouflage training this morning." Soldier: "Thank you very much, sir."

Derek Whitwam  
President

20 Mason Street, Moera  
Lower Hutt 5010

04 971 4636

derekw@paradise.net.nz