

The Royal New Zealand Navy

Page 1 – Introduction

(MCH, 2014m)

The Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) was established on 1 October 1941. As an institution of the state, it had a long gestation. Its emergence took several forms as New Zealand sought to meet its naval defence needs within a relatively small resource base – a perennial problem. Today the Navy is part of the New Zealand Defence Force.

Of all the influences that have shaped the RNZN, the British connection is the most significant. Given that it began life as a small element of the Royal Navy, British practices, attitudes and traditions inevitably underpinned the RNZN's development. British influence was encouraged by the continued practice of borrowing Royal Navy officers to command the New Zealand force. The position of chief of naval staff was held by a British officer until 1960, when Peter Phipps was appointed.

During the 1960s the RNZN also began to move away from British symbols. In 1968 it adopted its own white ensign (in which the Southern Cross supplants the St George's Cross), replacing the British white ensign it had flown since its inception.

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