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[HISTORY \(/TAGS/HISTORY\)](#)

New Zealand History: Operation Grapple

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It's a largely unknown chapter in New Zealand history called Operation Grapple. Operation Grapple was a series of nuclear tests conducted in the Mid-Pacific by the British Government from May 1957 - September 1958. The New Zealand Government provided assistance by sending a Royal New Zealand Navy survey ship HMNZS Lachlan to survey the two islands that were chosen as the sites for testing, and two frigates: HMNZS Rotoiti and Pukaki to assist during the tests. More than 500 young Kiwis sailors were exposed to the nuclear tests, as witnesses. Photographer Denise Baynham's exhibition of the photographs and stories of navy veterans "Operation Grapple, We were There" has been in various galleries around the country and is currently on at Whirinaki Whare Taonga, the Art Museum in Upper Hutt. Lindsay Roberts who features in the exhibition is a NZ Navy veteran now in his mid-80s who lives in the Bay of Plenty. He was on board the NZ navy frigate Pukaki in 1957-58 and he witnessed four British nuclear blasts at Christmas Island in the western Pacific.

Operation Grapple - We Were There is a powerful photography exhibition by Denise which tells the story of Operation Grapple through the portraits of 19 NZ nuclear test veterans and their stories. Photo: Denise Baynham Photography

