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# **REMEMBERING SEAFARERS**

The (Missing) History of New Zealanders  
employed in the Mercantile Marine  
during World War 1

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## ABSTRACT

The story of the New Zealand men and women who were employed in the Mercantile Marine during World War 1 is absent from the historiography. This thesis contends that this workforce of New Zealanders existed, was substantial in number and that their human stories are missing from historiography despite there being extensive wartime stories to tell.

A workforce of New Zealand merchant seafarers existed during World War 1 and is definable and recognisable as a group. Each individual within this group is not easily identifiable because detailed and completed records of their identity and service were never centrally maintained.

New Zealand maritime and World War 1 histories have not addressed the seafarers' intimate human stories and have instead focus on either Naval or industry stakeholder's organisational history of the war period. This is clearly evident from a detailed review of relevant material published during the century since the declaration of World War 1 in 1914.

The crew employed on the Union Steam Ship Company's twin screw steamship *Aparima* provide a small but enlightening example of the human stories that are absent. Their individual stories encompass many aspects of everyday experiences such as the ever present danger of enemy attack and the impact of the war on the crew and their families and loved ones. A microhistory of New Zealanders employed on *Aparima* refutes by example, the argument that World War 1 New Zealand merchant seafarers did not have a unique story to tell and therefore they are absent from historiography.

The history of New Zealand maritime and World War 1 historiography provides possible reasons for the missing history, as does the demographics of this workforce. The primary rationale identified include government and military editorial influence, a sense that merchant seafarers belonged to the British rather than New Zealand Mercantile Marine, and a belief that they did not fit alongside the ANZAC legend of the heroic soldier sacrificing all for King and Country.



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## **GLOSSARY**

Allies / Allied	Countries that fought against the Central Powers in WWI.
Bark or barque	Type of sailing vessel with three or more masts.
Bhandary	Cook.
Black Gang	Trimmers, Stokers and Firemen work in the engine room. They were called 'black' because of soot and coal dust in the engine room made everything black.
Bosun (Boatswain)	Oversees maintenance and deck activity over the entire ship.
Butler	Saloon Second Class Steward.
Cassab or Kussab	Lamp trimmer.
Deck Serang	Deck Bosun.
Deck Tindal	Bosun's Mate.
Donkeyman	Oversaw the operation and maintenance of any and all assorted machinery and assisted with the maintenance of ship's main engines.
Engine Room Serang	Engine Room Donkeyman.
Engine Room Tindal	Donkeyman's Mate.
Fireman	Boiler Stoker.
Greaser	Monitoring and lubricating the engines.
Lamp trimmer	Leading hand on deck under the Boatswain.
Military Age	Males not less than twenty years and under forty-six years of age who were unmarried were mandated under the National Registration Act, 1915 and the Military Service Act, 1916 to enrol for Military Service.
Officer Commanding	Commander of the army formation.
Commanding Officer	In the merchant service, this is the ship's master or captain.
Prize Crew	A group of men placed aboard a captured vessel in order for it to be sailed to a friendly port.
Prize	A captured merchant ship that was captured and taken to a friendly port for sale, rather than destroyed. Prize money obtained from the sale was distributed amongst those involved in its capture and return.

Punkha Boy	Fan Cord Puller Boy.
Rating	An articulated member of a ship's crew but not an officer.
Red Duster	Ensign flown specifically by British Merchant Seamen.
Stern	Rear or aft-most part of a ship.
Stem	Most forward part of a boat or ship's bow.
Stokehold Grating	Exhaust ventilation from the engine room stokehold.
Topas	Sweeper, cleansed the "heads" (on board lavatories), washed utensils, scrubbed the decks.
Trimmer	Supplies the coal from the bunkers to the stokers.
War Grave	Burial place for members of the armed forces or civilians who died during military campaigns or operations. They are provided by the Commonwealth nation-state and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AD	Army Department, New Zealand
AJHR	Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives
ANZ	Archives New Zealand, Wellington
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited
AWMM	Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland
BT	Board of Trade, United Kingdom
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
HMNZHS	His Majesty's New Zealand Hospital Ship
HMNZT	His Majesty's New Zealand Troopship
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World, also called Wobblies
NA	The National Archives (of United Kingdom), London
NFSA	National Film & Sound Archive (of Australia)
nhp	Nominal horsepower
NLNZ	National Library of New Zealand, Wellington
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
P&O	Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
RN	Royal Navy
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve
SS	Steam Ship
SY	Steam Yacht
TSS	Twin Screw Steamer
USSCo	Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Limited
WCA	Wellington City Archives, Wellington
WWI	World War 1