

Aylwyn Patterson was a deck apprentice on the *Otaio* when His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh visited both her and the *Durham*. Aylwyn has kindly provided this article on the Royal visit, which appeared as pages 14 to 18 in the Maori Club magazine. He has also added a photograph of him being presented to Prince Philip together with his recollections of that day.

## *Royal visit to Durham and Otaio*

ROYAL ALBERT DOCK 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 1964

When a ship is launched or sails on her maiden voyage there is undoubtedly justification for celebration and moments for reflection by all those who are responsible for ordering new tonnage, but how could the Company express its feelings about the passing of *Durham* as a Cadet Training Ship.

*Durham*, built in 1934, was the first ship in the British Merchant Navy to be designed specifically as a Cadet Training Ship. During her career nearly 300 Cadets have been trained aboard and at present 18 of our Masters are *Durham* 'old boys'.

As you know, it is customary for a member of the management to inspect the Cadets at the end of each voyage but, on this occasion, it was decided to invite a V.I.P. to undertake the last inspection. Now, V.I.P.'s come in all shapes and sizes but in this special case there was only one

'natural' – His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

The article written by a *Durham* Cadet and the pictures that follow will tell the story of His Royal Highness's visit to our ships but you may be interested to know something of the preparations. When did we start? How did we contact Prince Philip?

The idea of inviting Prince Philip to visit one or more of the Cadet Training Ships was mooted some twelve to eighteen months ago but we had to wait for the right opportunity to develop before applying for a 'Royal Visit'. When it was realised that *Durham*, at the end of her last voyage as a Cadet Training Ship, and *Otaio* would be virtually alongside one another in the Royal Albert Dock, it was decided, despite the short notice, to make a formal application to Buckingham

*H.R.H. addresses Cadets in 'Otaio'.*





*Inspecting Cadets at work.*

Palace (H.R.H's Private Secretary) asking if His Royal Highness would honour us by taking the final inspection of *Durham* Cadets and inspecting *Otaio*. Needless to say, we were all delighted when Prince Philip accepted the invitation.

During the three weeks that followed, increasing activity was witnessed in Gravel Lane (some say that more dust was raised than by the demolition squads in Leadenhall Street), the Dock Office and the two Cadet Ships. Preparations included visits and numerous telephone calls to Buckingham Palace (a private line would have been fun) and of course a dress rehearsal on board the ships – the scene was set.



*H.R.H. with Cadet Oakshot.*

Message from *Rakaia* to *Durham* conveying loyal greetings dated Port Nelson 26<sup>th</sup> February 1964 and reply from H.R.H.

COMMANDER DURHAM NUZEDOC LONDON ENGLAND

PLEASE CONVEY FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH BEGINS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS TO OUR SISTER CADET SHIPS DURHAM AND OTAIO ALL OFFICERS AND CADETS OF RAKAIA DESIRE TO EXPRESS OUR MOST LOYAL GREETINGS TO HER MAJESTY AND YOURSELF AND SEND OUR BEST WISHES FOR SUCCESSFUL INSPECTION STOP OGDEN MASTER RAKAIA

THE MASTER MV RAKAIA PO BOX 1699 WELLINGTON NZ

MOST GRATEFUL FOR YOUR KIND MESSAGE RECEIVED IN OTAIO THIS MORNING STOP THOROUGHLY ENJOYED SEEING SHIPS AND CADETS AND ONLY SORRY RAKAIA COULD NOT BE THERE TOO  
PHILIP

27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1964

**A report from former *Durham* Cadet A. J. Davies at present serving in *Rakaia***

In writing this report, some three months after the Duke of Edinburgh's visit, I am convinced that the excitement and pride of the occasion began on 18<sup>th</sup> February while *Durham* was at sea on her way from Curaçao to London. On that day Captain Guyler made it known that he wished to speak to the cadets at 17.30 hours. When we were assembled, he told us that he had received a radio message to the effect that His Royal Highness Prince Philip would inspect the ship at 11.00 hours on 27<sup>th</sup> February in London. The announcement was initially greeted with absolute silence, followed by enthusiastic comments and discussion.

Very little time was wasted on discussion however, as we soon found ourselves far too busy to indulge in prolonged conversation. *Durham*, always a well-kept ship, was soon to display a shine, the like of which she had never displayed before.

The following nine days were crowded,

to say the least. We berthed in the Royal Albert Dock on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the following days being spent painting the ship's side and putting the finishing touches to our efforts on deck.

At last the day arrived, and almost before we knew it we were drawn up in two ranks on the After Deck, facing the gangway. At 11.00 hours the Royal car drew up, and as the Commander prepared to greet the Duke of Edinburgh we cadets were brought to attention by the Cadet Captain (H. J. Vercoe). In a few moments the Duke of Edinburgh appeared with several officials and was greet by Captain Guyler, who then introduced the Senior Officers. His Royal Highness spoke to the Petty Officers before inspecting the cadets, after which he was shown the cadets' accommodation and Ante-Room by Captain Guyler. The Duke of Edinburgh then left the ship to inspect the *Otaio* which was berthed some distance astern of *Durham*.

Shortly after the Duke of Edinburgh had left the *Durham* we made our way to *Otaio* where the Cadets from both ships were assembled in the Cadets' Ante-Room. Having completed his inspection, His Royal Highness gave us a short address, speaking about the sea as a way of life and of our good fortune in having joined ships where comprehensive and skilled training was provided, adding that he had been most favourably impressed by his short visit to the two Cadet Ships.

[Another excellent account was received by Cadet K. G. Troughton. Ed.]



*Talking to Cadet Sutherland  
(Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award winner).*



*Mr. C. A. W. Dawes  
thanking H.R.H.*

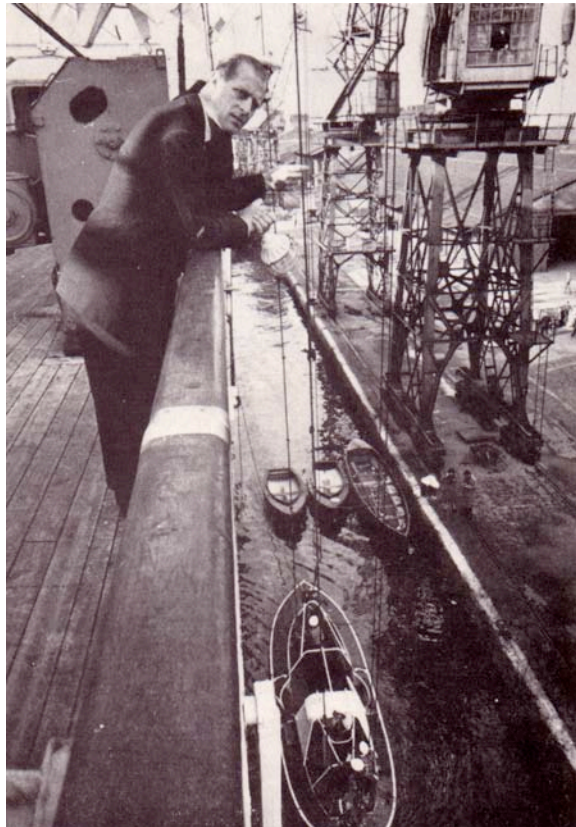
*H.R.H. inspects  
'Durham' Cadets.*







*Rescue Boat  
about to be launched.  
(Photograph by courtesy of  
Evening Standard.)*



*Rescue Boat  
in the water.  
(Photograph by courtesy of  
Evening Standard.)*

COMMENTARY  
BY  
AYLWYN PATTERSON



Aylwyn – Head Bowed

At the end of any voyage on *Otaio* all cadets knew that we would have the “Bullshit” inspection when the Directors would visit the vessel and inspect the cadets and the vessel.

On this occasion, however, we knew that it was something special. We had been advised that we would be alongside with *Durham* on the completion of her final voyage and that the Duke of Edinburgh had graciously agreed to inspect both vessels.

*Otaio* went into high gear, and we polished and painted until we felt we could have given the Royal Yacht *Britannia* a run for her money. Hatches 4 and 5 on *Otaio* had false decking, giving a good open area when the vessel was at sea for the cadets to enjoy with deck tennis and deck cricket. In port, when opened for cargo work, wire runners were strung from mast house to mast house as a safety barrier, but on this occasion this was not deemed sufficient and metre high angle iron was welded into the corners of each hatch with several lengths of wire strung between them.

All cadets were coached in the correct etiquette for greeting His Royal Highness, and, whilst the expression “on pain of death” was not openly used, it was certainly understood.

On the day in question, I was based on the Boat Deck with cadet "Tosh" Kain and Bosun Campbell. Together we were overhauling a heavy-duty lift block. H.R.H. spent some time with us, as the Bosun entertained the Duke with some of his experiences from his native isle of Barra.

As the Royal party moved on, the Duke watched as a Crash Boat drill was carried out. *Otaio* had been moved off the wharf and a pontoon placed between the vessel and the wharf so that the boat could be launched.

Schoolie, Tony Date, later Captain R. A. Date was in command. Fortunately Tony had instructed the Cadet crew that, if anything looked like going pear-shaped, he would blow a whistle. As, on any such special occasion, Murphy was involved, and a tricing in wire became fouled in the stow position. Tony noticed this and duly blew his whistle. In a very short space of time the problem was cleared, and the Crash Boat was launched in a time and manner that reflected very well on *Otaio*. The Duke later commented to Captain Fred Angus that he had noticed the problem and was impressed with the recovery.

On a sad reflection, one of the senior cadets involved in the Crash Boat drill and pictured, John Russel, later to be Cadet Captain, was drowned with some of his family in the *Dalwyn* incident off the Cornish coast some time later.

Finally the Duke addressed the combined Cadets of *Otaio* and *Durham* in *Otaio's* anteroom. The only downside was that he did not ask that we be given a day off!!

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