

The Voyage to New Zealand

Tony had been in the RAF since 1938. Duncan Sandys' 1957 White Paper changed the future of the RAF and officers were offered a golden Handshake to retire early. Tony decided to take this and he left the force in early 1958 to emigrate to New Zealand.

He booked a trip for the family for March with the Shaw Savill Line. Unfortunately, this had to be delayed and we went to Exmouth, Devon for six months and then sailed from Tilbury on the Athenic in late September.



Exmouth, Devon: Back garden,



on the beach.

The ship's route took us through the middle of the Azores. The next landfall was at Curacao in the Lesser Antillies, part of the Dutch Caribbean region where the ship was to refuel. The Queen Emma pontoon bridge had to be opened to allow us into the port.



Curacao.



Athenic refuelling.



While the ship was tied up for the day we were able to go ashore to the shops and to a beach resort.

The next stop was the Panama Canal. Carol and I were allowed to go on the roof of the bridge to get the best view of the railway engines pulling us through the locks.



That night the ship stopped in Panama City where Tony did get off go to the shops but it was too late for the rest of us.

The next stop was Pitcairn Island. The new Governor of Fiji, Sir Kenneth Maddocks was on the Athenic and this position was also Governor of Pitcairn so he used the opportunity to visit the island. Three longboats came to the ship and some islanders set up stall to sell local craft goods while Sir Kenneth was taken ashore.



Three longboats.

Peter, our Cairn Terrier had a kennel on the foredeck and we could visit him every day. After Panama the crew set up a canvas swimming pool with salt water on the foredeck so that we could cool down in the heat of the afternoons. There were flying fish that scattered away from the ship's bow. Sometimes, in the mornings, there would be flying fish on the deck.

One day the ship's engine broke down and we sat becalmed on the ocean while it was repaired. A large shark came around to inspect, attracted, no doubt, by the ship's garbage.

We arrived in Wellington on a cold and miserable morning in late October. We were able to stay with some friends of my parents, the Foukes, in Plimmerton for a few days while the ship



Wellington Harbour.



Plimmerton Bay.

was unloaded. This town was rather rural in the late 1950s and the entertainment was a film show and dance in the local yacht club.

As soon as the car, a Morris 1000 Traveller, was available this was loaded with some luggage and we headed north for warmer climates. Peter had to stay in quarantine on Soames Island. We travelled via Napier and stopped overnight in Rotorua. We stopped at Rerewhakaaitu to visit the Cloustons who had been Tony's commander at Northolt.



Whanganui river?



Napier 24 Oct 1958 2:40pm.

Eventually we got to Auckland and caught the car ferry to the North Shore where we stayed in a motel run by a Mr Morton that was on Lake Pupuke and close to the boat ramp end of Takapuna Beach. Later, Mr Morton's brother was Carol's professor at University. Carol and I could play Croquet on the motel's lawn.

Having decided that we would settle on the North Shore, Carol and I were left with a couple while the parents returned to Wellington to arrange the rest of the luggage being sent north. The couple lived at the top of Browns Bay Road and the parents knew them when they had lived in Devon. We were there for Guy Fawkes day.

When the parents returned they rented the ground floor flat at number 6 Esmonde Road for six months. I was sent to Belmont Intermediate and Carol to Westlake High School. The Intermediate school said that I should be in primary school but as there was only a handful of weeks to go to the end of the year it would be less disruptive if they would put me in form 1 and then I should stay in form 1 the next year. They actually put me in form 2