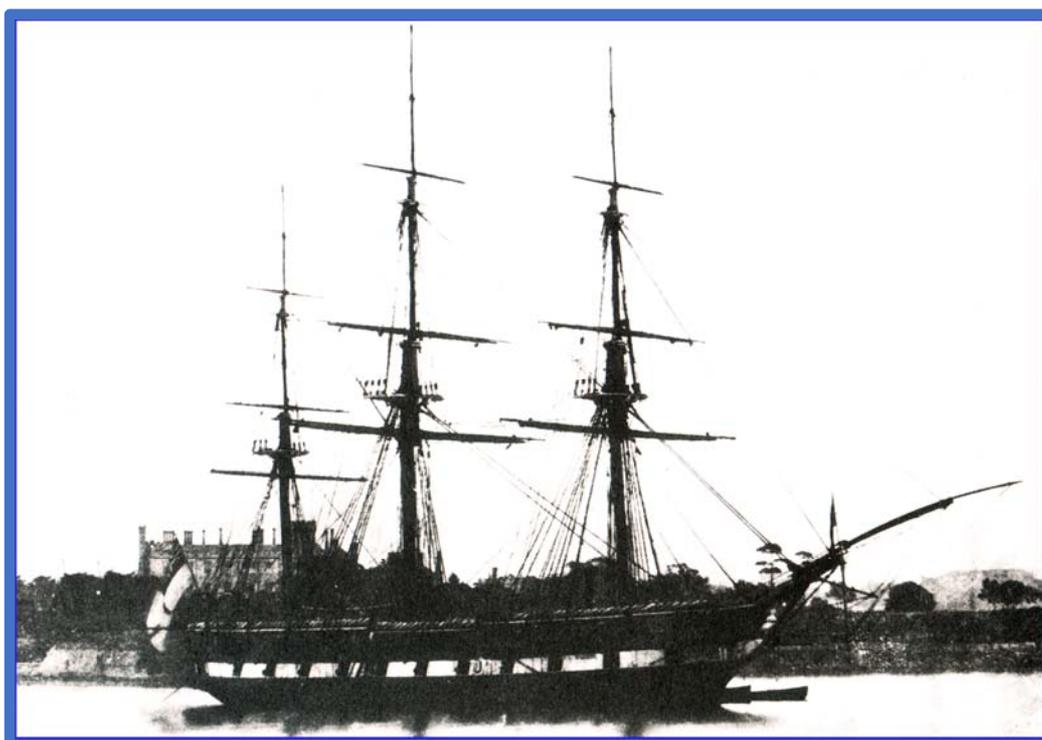


THE ROYAL NAVY IN NEW ZEALAND

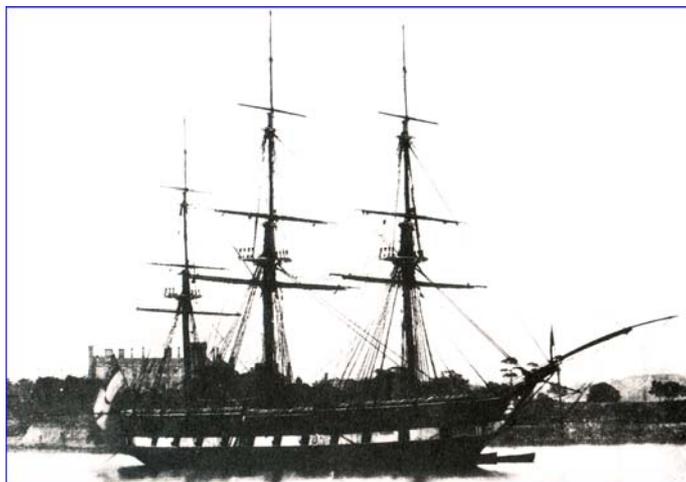
HMS IRIS 1859 – 1861



GERALD J. ELLOTT
MNZM RDP FRPSL FRPSNZ

AUGUST 2017

HMS IRIS



HMS Iris

The name IRIS derived from “The personification of the rainbow and a favourite messenger of Zeus and Hera”

Sixth Rates, 28 -24 Guns (‘Donkey Frigates’ / ‘Jackass Frigates’)

Vestal Class 1831.26 *Sir William Symonds* design

130', 106.5' x 40' x 10.5'. 911 75/94

240 men, 26 guns, Keel September 1838. Launched 14 July 1840.

Lent to the Atlantic Telegraph Co. in 1867, sold to Atlantic Construction & Maintenance Co. 1870.

Midshipman Gambier was appointed to HMS *Iris* in 1857, whilst the *Iris* was being fitted out at Chatham, bound for the Australian Division of the East Indies Station.

The following notes are taken from his memoirs'

17 Midshipman joined at Chatham.

HMS *Iris* sailed on 8 March 1857, however due to a gale put in at Plymouth for 24 hours, and then on to the Antipodes.

Only a few days were spent at Rio de Janeiro, for two reasons, both epidemic: -
Namely *yellow fever* and *desertion* from our ship,

1 The first killing people daily by the hundred.

2 The second, a disease we never shook off all the commission.

The Cape was reached and whilst there Midshipman Wood fell overboard, Sydney Heads were sighted on 1 July 1857. HMS *Iris*, visited Norfolk Island, and visited New Zealand first in September 1857, for supplies and then back to Norfolk Island.

Captain William Loring CB., was appointed the Senior Officer on the Australian Division of the East Indies Station. and when the Royal Navy Australian Station

was established in June 1859, HMS *Iris* became the first Flagship on the Station, and Captain William Loring C.B was appointed the first Commodore.

Flogging Ship

Midshipman Gambier notes that the *Iris* was a “flogging ship” and “a bluejacket had to keep his eye skinned to avoid the cat” ...

“I have counted up my log records of flogging, and find that there were close on nine hundred lashings distributed amongst the bluejackets and marines, or about enough to have administered some five or six to every living soul on board, including the Skipper and the Parson; good sound lashing too, with a cruel whistle through the air, as the nine tails spread themselves out on the man’s back, and not the feeble, trumpery floggings as received by garrotters and wife-beaters ashore which are childish in comparison. The unrecorded flogging of the ship’s boys, and the countless canings on their hands are not included in the above nine hundred; and would certainly be treble..., we reach the respectable figure of two thousand seven hundred cuts with cat and cane”

Gambier in one of his reminiscence moods, confirms his beliefs: -

“That how important *Good Clothes* were, and how easy it was for lads to go to the dogs for want of good clothes! he carries on that *the world primarily judges us by our clothes*”.

New Hebrides (20.5.1858 – 22 8 1858)

The next cruise was to the New Hebrides, and on to the island of Tanna, where a Missionary had been killed, and by questionable actions, the villages were sacked and the natives massacred.

Apparently, this action was by instructions received from the Admiralty, and was described as “**The punishment cruise of May 1858**”, Loring had no choice but to burn the offending villages and destroy crops and canoes on various islands. (*Details not included in the Ship’s Log*).

New Zealand

HMS *Iris* arrived at the Bay of Islands on 8 February 1859 and at Auckland on 17 February. On 26 February 1859, Governor Gore Brown with his secretary Mr. Stewart and staff, went on board, leaving the next day for Taranaki.

On the 6 March 1859, anchored off Taranaki, where the Governor and staff left, continuing on to Wellington on the 9 March 1859. Departed Wellington on the 24 March 1859, returning to Auckland via Taranaki, North Cape, stopping at Kawau Island 31 March 1859 and Auckland on 4 April 1859.

HMS *Iris* left Auckland 28 April 1859 for Sydney, arriving there on 12 May 1859.

On 10 December 1859, HMS *Iris* returned to Auckland from Sydney via Norfolk Island. Departing on the 19 December 1859, for a cruise to Lyttelton and Wellington, before returning to Auckland via Kawau, on the 8 February 1860, and leaving for Sydney on 12 February 1860.

First Taranaki War

The conflict at Taranaki, commenced with the engagement at the Waitara on 17 March 1860, and ended on 19 March 1861.

Commodore William Loring CB. and HMS *Iris* returned to New Zealand and reached Auckland on 22 April 1860. HMS *Iris* remained moored at Britomart Point until 2 January 1861, when the Bay of Islands was visited on two occasions, prior to finally leaving New Zealand on 6 April 1861.

April 1860 – April 1861

During this period, there were extensive arguments and differences of opinion between the NZ Governor and the Admiralty, regarding the continuing use of HMS *Iris* in New Zealand. Loring at this stage being the Commodore of the Australian Station agreed with the New Zealand demands.

There were even more problems when the decision to provide the thirty-two pounder guns from HMS *Iris*, to the Naval Brigade was questioned, in order to make the ship efficient once again.

It would appear that earlier Loring supported the New Zealand point of view regarding the need for a Naval presence, and in a letter to the Admiralty dated 13 February 1858, wrote that a warship should be available for permanent duty on the southern coast “if it were for the sake of keeping alive the spirit of loyalty and good feeling which ought to exist towards the Mother Country.” However later, on 28 November 1858, he was critical of the colonists, who were asking for more ships and a separate station, but were unwilling to contribute to the costs of such enterprise or to the £20,000 a year cost of keeping HMS *Iris* at Sydney.

It is also recorded that contrary to instructions in June 1860, from the Admiralty to return to England, with HMS *Iris*, he considered that it was in the best interests of both Britain and New Zealand that HMS *Iris* and the Naval Brigade stayed in New Zealand, so rather than completely disobey the order, he resigned his position of Commodore to the Australia Station, and returned himself to England, turning his command over to Captain Beauchamp Seymour.

Commodore Frederick Beauchamp Seymour (HMS *Pelorus*) took over the command of the Naval Brigade from HMS *Iris*.

Gambier noted that life on land was much the same as on ship, with ordinary sea-watch, and lookouts, and “Bells” rang regularly every hour and half hour, sea fashion, lights went out and “rounds” took place with the ordinary routine to which we were all accustomed. We simply transferred the decks of our frigate to terra firma.

Naval Brigade

It was due to William Loring’s initiative that a Naval Brigade was formed from officers and men from the *Iris*, to assist the 65th Regiment engaged in the fighting at New Plymouth.

While the Naval Brigade was at Taranaki only a skeleton crew were left on board under Lieutenant Goldwin R. Breton.

A Naval Brigade of 150 officers and seamen from the *Iris*, was formed and was sent urgently to Taranaki.

Gambier was given charge of the ship’s 12 pounder howitzer, the Naval Brigade including the gun, were marched to Onehunga where HMS *Cordelia* conveyed them to New Plymouth, where they landed in the “roaring surf”.

The main engagement was at Puketakauere, where on 27 June 1860, the British troops totalling 350 men, including 65 Naval Brigade, were attacked by a large force of Maoris, who did not wait to be attacked in their fort, but manned their outlying trenches. In the ensuing fighting the British losses were 30 killed and 34 wounded.

Following this defeat, a Proclamation was issued by Colonel Gold for families at New Plymouth to prepare for departure by sea to take the women and children to more peaceful homes until the war was over, and most of them went to Nelson.

It appears that HMS *Cordelia* was running a shuttle service between the Manukau Fleet and Taranaki, on 8 July 1860, she brought 80 men from *Victoria*, 75 from the *Iris*, and 30 from *Cordelia*.

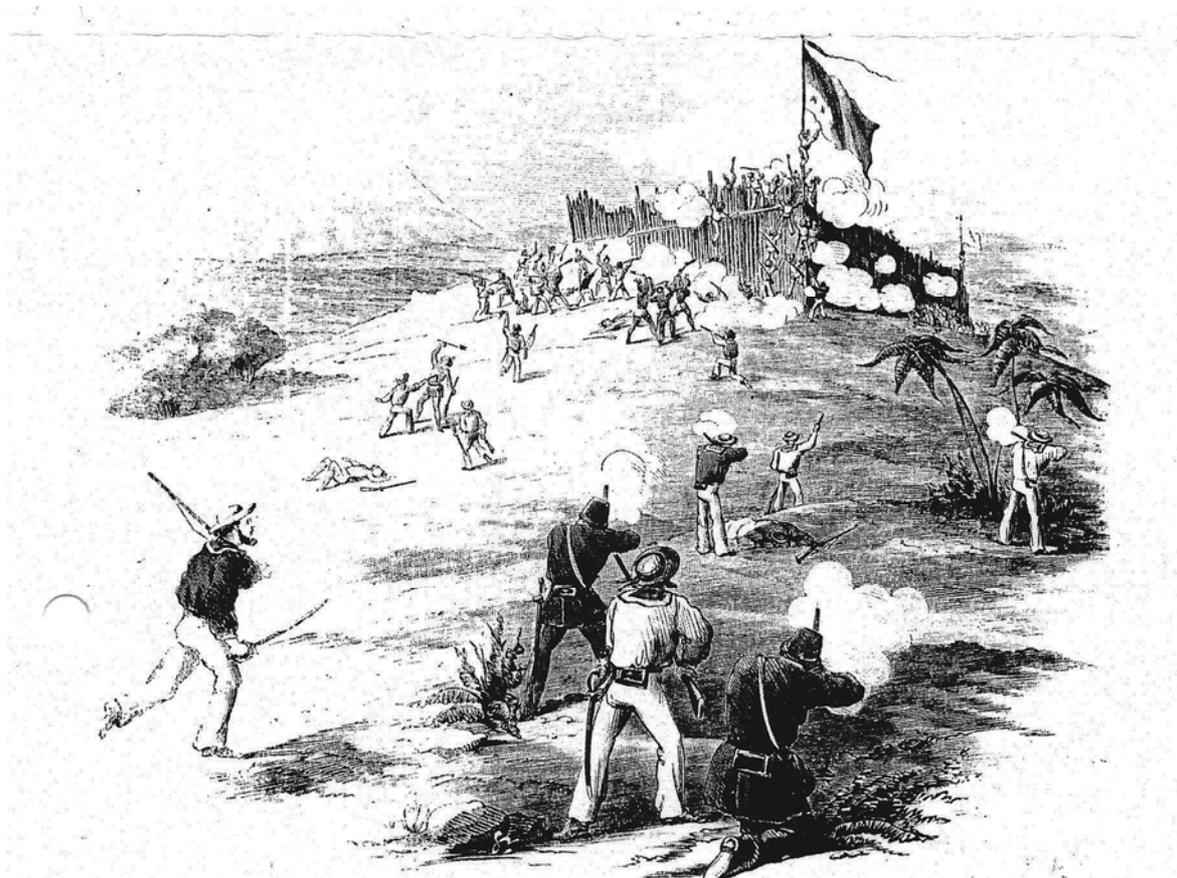
On 16 July 1860, she carried a further 75 seamen and 47 marines, in all the Naval Brigade totalled 600 men.

During August 1860, a lively skirmish occurred on the 20th within half a mile of the barracks on Marsland Hill. Where three companies of the 65th and a detachment from HMS *Iris*, were involved with a body of over 200 Maoris.

The Naval Brigade was involved at all the main engagements;

7 September 1860	Huirangi
12 October 1860	Kaihihi River positions
6 November 1860	Mahoetahi
30 December 1860	Matarikoriko
23 January 1861	No. 3 Redoubt, Huirangi
10 February 1861	No. 7 Redoubt, Huirangi
3 March 1861	Brooklands (New Plymouth)
5 March 1861	Sap at Te Arei

Naval Brigade known losses totalled 23 either killed or wounded, with possibly four losses of HMS *Iris* personnel, Henry Baker RM, Alfred Broome AB Seaman (Died later of wounds), J. Fisher AB Seaman, T. Jenkins AB Seaman.



Storming the Waireka Pah, Taranaki National Library of Australia.

FIRST TARANAKI WAR 1860 - 1861

HMS IRIS

HMS *Iris*, 6th Rate Frigate, 1840, 26 guns, 240 men, sold in 1869, Captain Commander William Loring. HMS *Iris* was the first flagship on the Australian Station 1859-60, with Loring appointed Commodore. Arrived at the Bay of Islands 8 February 1859, and visited Taranaki, before returning to Sydney. Returned to Auckland on 10 December 1859 until 12 February 1860, once again returning in April 1860 to provide a Naval Brigade of 150 men for the action at Taranaki. In all the Naval Brigade totalled 600 men, made up of men from HMS *Niger*, *Cordelia* and *Pelorus*, assisting the 65th Regiment



HMS *Iris*

4 February 1861 Seaman Joseph Richards, HMS *Iris*, Auckland, NZ



NZ 1d Chalon, cancelled with the P8 barred obliterator No.1. Counter-signed by Lieutenant Goldwin R. Breton. AUCKLAND NZ 4 FE 4 -1861 8 cds SWANAGE 18 AP 61 & WAREHAM 18 AP 61 cds. P&O *Salsette* from Sydney, Galle P&O *Colombo*, at Alexandria P&O *Massila*, to Southampton 17 April 1861

This is the only New Zealand Seamen's 1d concession rate letter recorded, posted in the NZ Postal System using a 1d Chalon postage stamp 1855-1874

Joseph Richards, was born at Cowes, Isle of Wight, and joined HMS *Iris* on 14 January 1857. He was a Sailmaker's Mate and he obtained his first badge in July 1859, and his second badge 1 October 1860. A Sailmaker's Mate was classified as a Working Petty Officer 2nd Class and received £2. 4s a month, compared to an ordinary seaman's £1. 6s.

The New Zealand Medal

11 Officers, 49 Seamen and 12 Marines from HMS *Iris*, were awarded the NZ Medal for their services in the fighting at Taranaki; Pukekakeriki (12 October 1860), Materikirike (29 December 1860), and various other small engagements in 1861. All in conjunction with Officers and men from HMS *Cordelia*, HMS *Niger*, HMS *Pelorus* and HMCS *Victoria*.

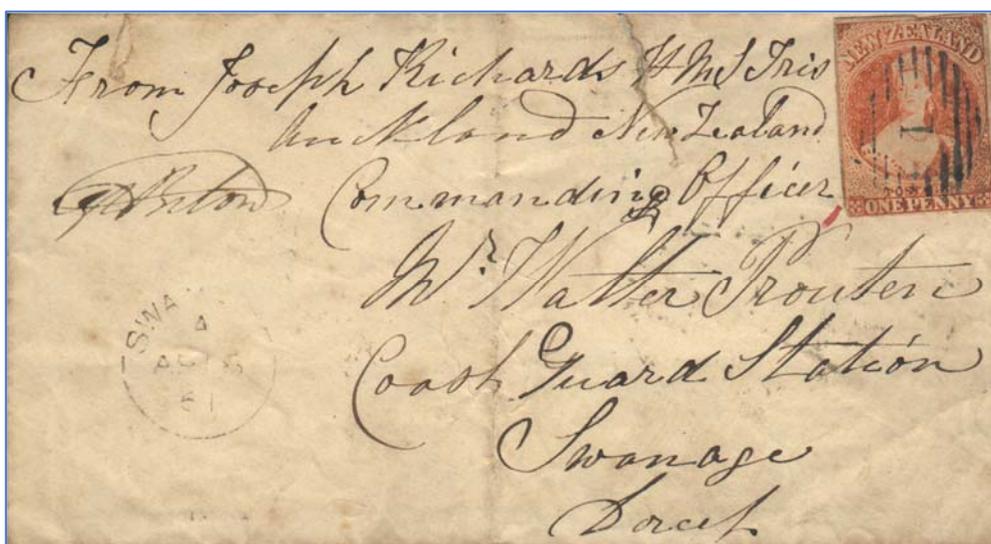
Midshipman James W. Gambier was a member of the Taranaki Naval Brigade under the command of Commodore Frederick Beauchamp Seymour (HMS *Pelorus*), and was awarded the NZ Medal 1860/61.

Homeward Bound

HMS *Iris* finally left New Zealand from Auckland on 6 April 1861. As Captain Loring had earlier resigned his position of Commodore of the Australasian Station, the Captain of the *Iris* was Charles E. H. Vernon of HMS *Cordelia*, and as Gambier pointed out in his journal: -

“For the rest of the commission the **Cat-of-nine-tails** slept undisturbed”

St. Helena (James Bay) was reached on 7 June 1861, arrived at Spithead, 24 July 1861. The ship's Company was paid off on 2 August 1861, with the pennant hauled down at sunset.



Auckland 4 February 1861 Unframed cds on reverse. Receiving cds, Swanage & Wareham, 18 April 1861. 1d. Concession Rate Letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Goldwin R. Breton. The mail was carried on the *Lord Worsley* which left Auckland at 4 pm, 4 February 1861 for Sydney. The P&O *Salsette* left Sydney 20 February 1861, mail transferred to the P&O *Colombo* at Galle 19 March 1861. At Alexandria 5 April 1861, the P&O *Massilla* carried the mail to Southampton 17 April 1861. Adhesive cancelled with the PB obliterator No. 1

HMS IRIS - LOGS

HMS Iris Log Ref. ADM 53/6901 29 Dec 1856 to 19 May 1859

29.12.56	Chatham Docks Commissioning
20.2.57	Sheerness
27.2.57	Spithead
09.3.57	Plymouth Sound
10.3.57	Sailed
20.4.57	Rio
07.5.57	Sailed
26.5.57	Simon's Bay
31.5.57	At sea
02.7.57	Sydney
07.9.57	To sea
02.10.57	Auckland
03.10.57	To sea
13.10.57	Norfolk Isl. Cascade Bay
16.10.57	At sea
27.10.57	Sydney Farm Cove
27.11.57	At sea
08.12.57	Off Port Aneityum
16.12.57	Sailed
25.12.57	Off Kororarika
31.12.57	Sailed
02.1.58	Auckland
06.1.58	Sailed
07.1.58	Kororarika
17.1.58	Sailed
21.1.58	Auckland
01.2.58	Sailed
17.2.58	At Anchor Hobson's Bay Port Philip
04.3.58	Sailed
19.3.58	Farm Cove Sydney
28.3.58	Cockatoo Dock, cleaning ship's bottom & refitting
01.4.58	Anchored in Farm Cove
11.5.58	Watsons Bay
12.5.58	Farm Cove

18.5.58 end of log

HMS IRIS

HMS Iris Log Ref. ADM 53/6902 20 May 1858 to 7 October 1859

From 18 -20 May 1858 was in FitzRoy Dock

20.5.1858

There is a gap of 7 months in the log (see *The Punishment Cruise May 1858*)

08.2 1859	Kororareka Bay of Islands
11.2.59	At sea
17.2.59	Britomart Point (Auckland)
26.2.59	Received on board Governor Gore Brown, and his Secretary Mr. Stewart and a domestic for journey to Taranaki.
27.2.59	At sea
06.3.59	Anchorage off Taranaki, Governor Gore Brown etc. left
09.3.59	Lampton Harbour (Wellington)
24.3.59	Left & proceeded thro' Cook Strait to Taranaki & North Cape
31.3.59	Bon Accord Harbour (Kawau Island-Auckland)
04.4.59	To Auckland, and moored.
28.4.59	Left Auckland for Sydney
12.5.59	Moored off Garden Island, Sydney Harbour.
21.5.59	Farm Cove Sydney
30.8.59	Watson Bay
15.9.59	To Moreton Bay
20.9.59	Brisbane (by ship's boats?)
25.9.59	Leaving Moreton Bay
30.7.59	At Farm Cove
07.10.59	ditto

HMS Iris Log Ref. ADM 53/6903 9 October 1859 to 31 July 1860

09.10.59	Farm Cove
27.11.59	Left Sydney
05.12.59	At (<i>Norfolk Island?</i>)
10.12.59	At Auckland Harbour
19.12.59	Left Hauraki Gulf (Auckland)
25.12.59	Moored at Port Cooper (Lyttelton)
07.1.1860	Left Lyttelton
09.1.60	At Port Nicholson (Wellington)
12.1.60	Left Wellington
20.1.60	Moored off Britomart Point (Auckland)
01.2.60	Left for Kawau Island
02.2.60	At Kawau
08.2.60	Returned to Auckland
12.2.60	Left Auckland for Sydney via North Cape.
26.2.60	At Farm Cove Sydney
7.4.60	Left Sydney for Auckland
22.4.60	At Auckland
31.7.60	Still moored at Britomart Point

1.8.60	Moored off Britomart Point
2.1.1861	Sailed in the Hauraki Gulf and returned
5.2.61	Left for Bay of Islands
11.2.61	At Kororarika B OF I
12.2.61	Left
14.2.61	At Manganui Harbour
16.2.61	To Auckland
18.2.61	At Auckland
17.3.61	To Bay of Islands
20.3.61	At Kororarika (<i>Seven American Whalers in the Bay</i>)
21.3.61	Left the Bay for Auckland
24.3.61	At Auckland
6.4.1861	Left New Zealand via Cape Horn
7.6.61	At St Helena (James Bay)
8.6.61	Left for home
24.7.1861	Arrived at Spithead
26.7.61	Recd. Pilot to proceed up the Medway to Chatham
29 July 1861	Dismantled ship
2 August 1861	Paid off ship's Company. At sunset hauled down the pennant. Captain C. H. Vernon

266 IRIS, 26.	
<i>Australian Station.</i>	
Commodore ...	William Loring, C.B. 26 Mar 59
Lieutenant....	Francis A. Hume . . . 1 Mar 60
	Goldwin R. Breton.. 16 Aug 58
	Spencer, M. Medley 25 Apr 60
Master.....	Narcissus G. Argimban
	24 Dec 56
Chaplain and } Rev. William W. Campbell	
Nav. Instructor }	27 Jan 57
1st Lt. Mar. ..	Thomas Bent 3 Jan 57
Surgeon.....	Walter Lawrance. . 10 Jan 57
Paymaster	Matthew F. Moresby 6 Jan 57
Assist. Surg....	William Connolly . 26 Apr 59
2nd Master....	Thomas Dobbin (<i>act</i>) 10 Feb 57
	Frederick A. Johnston (<i>act</i>)
	12 Jan 59
Assist. Paym..	Robert W. Parish . . 14 Jan 60

Royal Navy List 1860

Research by Margaret Frankcom
 Processed 10 - 17 May 2009
 Revised 20.8.2017

“The punishment cruise of May 1858”

Captain Loring the last senior officer of the division, faced on his arrival two cases needing immediate attention, one being that involved the mission vessel and another concerning the murder of an Englishman. But a greater problem was the difficulty in obtaining a reliable account of what really happened.

However, the Admiralty were adamant that the culprits should be punished, their villages burnt, and their crops and canoes destroyed, under these circumstances, Loring had no option than to follow these orders, and reluctantly he set out in May 1858 to Woodlark Island.

Interestingly, the Ship’s Log does not include any details for the 20 May 1858 to 8 February 1859 period.

Details Sydney Morning Herald Tuesday 7 September 1858

Cruise to Woodlark Island by HMS *Iris*

24.5.1858	Sailed from Port Jackson
30.5.58	Communicated with Lord Howe Island
3.6.58	Anchored off Cascades, Norfolk Island
5.6.58	Port Albert, Isle of Pines
13.6.58	Anchored for the night in Woodin Channel
14.6.58	Arrived Port de France New Caledonia
15.6.58	<i>Southern Cross</i> Melanesian Mission was on the shore
21.6.58	<i>Southern Cross</i> sailed for Norfolk Island
25.6.58	Anchored at Aneitium
29.6.58	Sailed for Tanna
30.6.58	Anchored off Black Beach Tanna
1.7.58	Moved to Wagus – Burnt villages etc.
2.7.58	Ditto
3.7.58	Sailed for Lifou, Loyalty Island
4.7.58	Anchored at Wreck Bay
5.7.58	Sailed from Lifou
8.7.58	Anchored in Dillon’s Bay Erromango
9.7.58	Sailed from Erromango
10.7.58	Anchored in Havannah Harbour, Sandwich Island
14.7.58	Brig. <i>Fanny</i> arrived
15.7.58	Sailed from Havannah Harbour
21.7.58	Arrived Woodlark
27.7.58	Woodlark Island. – Burnt villages etc.
29..7.58	Sailed from Woodlark Island
14.8.58	Anchored at Aneiteum
20.8.58	Sailed for Erromango
22.8.58	Sailed for Sydney

HMS *Iris* was Lent to the Atlantic Telegraph Co. in 1867, sold to Atlantic Construction & Maintenance Co. 1870.

In 1902, HMCS *Iris*, was built to maintain the Trans Pacific Cable, and was owned by Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. (Pacific Cable Board).



H. M. Cable Ship Iris and the Moea



1905 June 3 – FANNING ISLAND cds.
HM Cable Ship Iris cover to Suva, Fiji (14 June 1905)



HM Cable Ship Iris Insignia

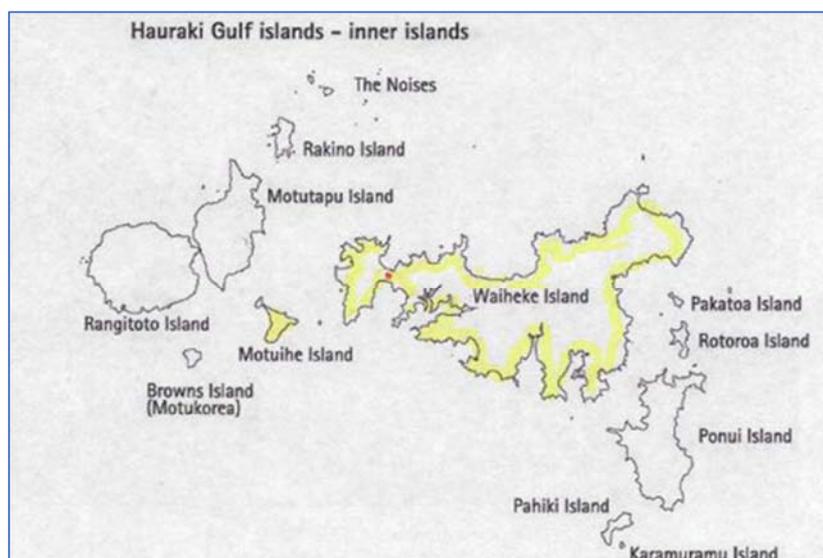
In 1912, HMSC *Iris*, diverted the “Norfolk Island - Doubtless Bay” cable into Auckland, replacing the over-land line route from Doubtless Bay to Auckland.

On 21 December 1917, HMSC *Iris*, while in service in the Great War, was involved in the capture of Count Felix von Luckner.

Kapitänleutnant Count Felix von Luckner was Captain of the SMS *Seeadler* (German for "Sea Eagle") a three-masted windjammer, which during the Great War, disguising his vessel as a Norwegian wood carrier, made his way across the Atlantic capturing and sinking merchant ships. Luckner would board the ship and capture her crew, then scuttle the ship.

Over the next two years, it's reported that Luckner and his crew captured and sank at least 14 Allied ships. In April 1917 SMS *Seeadler* rounded Cape Horn, heading for Mopelia Island, one of the Society Group, where it drifted onto a coral reef on 2 August.

Eventually after using one of the two ship's boats, to go to Fiji, von Luckner was finally imprisoned on 21 September 1917 in Fiji, and eventually sent to New Zealand, where he was placed in the Prisoner of War Camp on Motuihe Island in the Auckland Hauraki Gulf. (The adjacent island to Waiheke Island) where he escaped on 13 December 1917.



*Hauraki Gulf showing the close relationship of Motuihe Island with Waiheke Island (*My Home)*

Captain Count Felix von Luckner.



As far as von Luckner was concerned he still refused to accept that the war was over for him.

The commander of the POW camp at Motuihe had a fast motorboat, *Pearl* at his disposal, and on 13 December 1917, von Luckner faked setting up a play for Christmas with his men and used the provisions for the play to plan his escape.

Von Luckner and a number of other prisoners seized the *Pearl* and made for Coromandel Peninsular. In 1937 and 1938, he and his wife undertook a round-the world voyage, being warmly welcomed in New Zealand and Australia.

During the visit to Queensland both the press and public feted the Von Luxner's.

HMS *Iris*

Time spent in New Zealand

02 October 1857 –	3 October 1857
25 December 1857 –	01 February 1858
08 February 1858 –	28 April 1859
10 December 1859 –	12 February 1860
22 April 1860 –	06 April 1861

" Believe nothing that you hear,
a quarter of what you read,
and only a half of what you see,
and check and recheck your facts"
Percy de Worms

Once again, I found getting all the information difficult, especially from contemporary sources. I was particularly pleased to find the information on the **“Punishment Cruise of May 1858”**, which was not in the Ship’s Log.

I still have not been able to find out where HMS *Iris* was after that cruise finished in August 1858 and 8 February 1859 when HMS *Iris* was at the Bay of Islands.

I accept that any errors are my own, and look forward to receiving any comments as well as details of letters and new information.

Gerald J. Elliott MNZM

August 2017