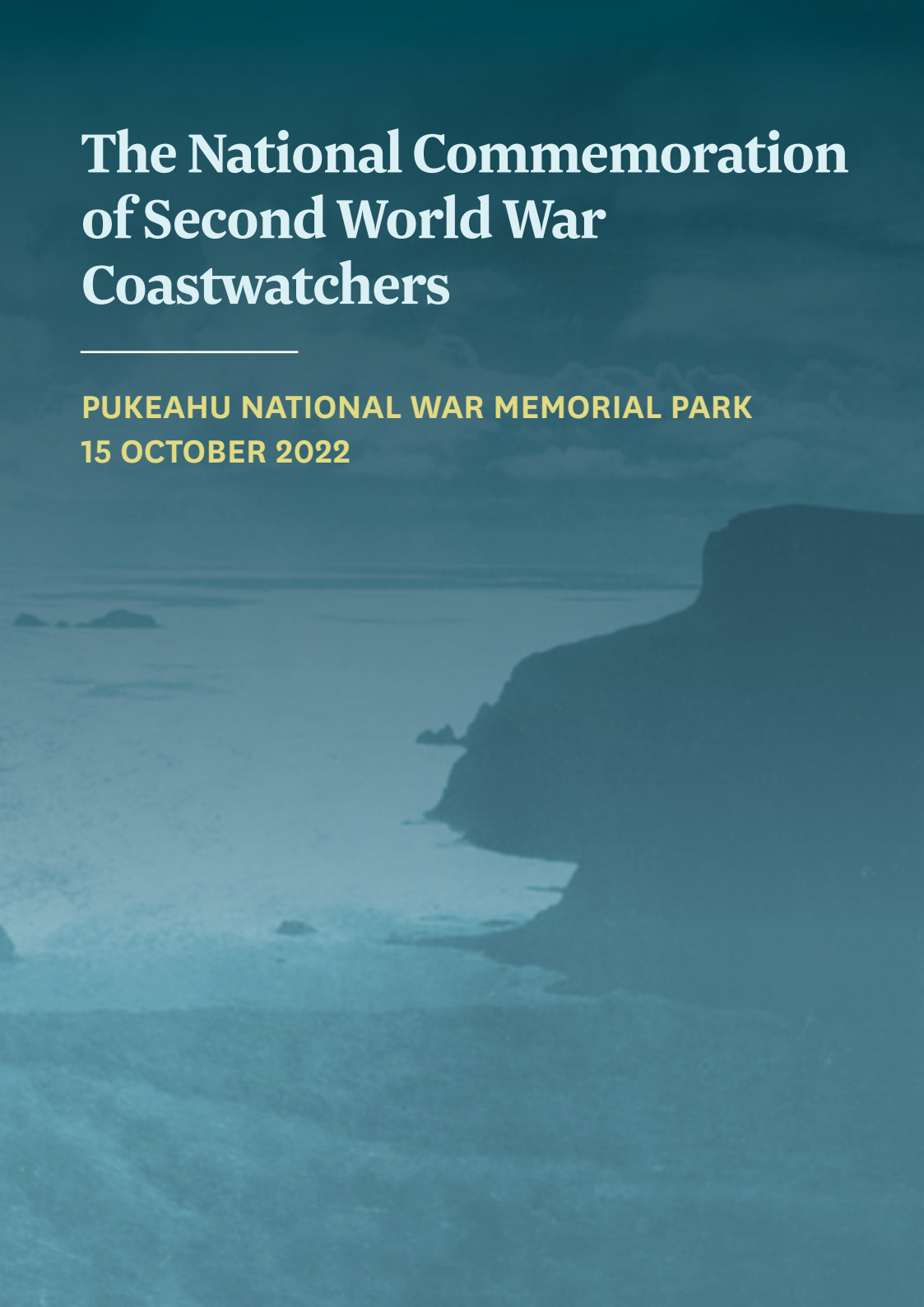


The National Commemoration of Second World War Coastwatchers

PUKEAHU NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL PARK
15 OCTOBER 2022

The background of the entire page is a teal-tinted photograph of a coastal landscape. On the right side, a dark, silhouetted cliff face extends from the top towards the middle of the frame. The ocean is visible on the left and bottom, with some white foam from waves breaking against the shore. The overall mood is somber and historical.

Contents

About the Coastwatchers	4
Order of Ceremony	8
Roll of Honour	14

About the Coastwatchers

Coastwatchers were civilian and armed forces personnel who kept a round-the-clock lookout for enemy ships and aircraft. Under a Royal Navy scheme drawn up in 1929 and expanded in 1938–39, 62 stations were set up around the New Zealand coast by March 1940, and 16 radar-equipped coastwatching stations were established later. Stations were added in the Auckland and Campbell Islands, and on Norfolk Island, the Kermadecs, the Chathams and far-off Pitcairn.

As war with Japan loomed, the Pacific network was extended. By late 1941, there were 58 stations across Fiji, Western Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Tokelau, the Gilbert (now Kiribati) and Ellice (now Tuvalu) Islands and Fanning Island (Tabuaeran), a landing point for the trans-Pacific telegraph cable that was 370 kilometres north of the Equator. Existing civilian and government radio transmitters and operators were utilised wherever possible. More stations were opened in 1942 and 1943, although some passed under US control and those in the Gilberts were lost when the Japanese advanced south.

A typical station in the Pacific comprised a radio operator with a radio transmitter, one or two ‘soldier companions’, and one or more lookout stations. Reports on the weather and on passing aircraft and ships were sent

to a parent station and thence to Suva. Important messages were transmitted to intelligence centres in Honolulu or Auckland.

While the naval authorities had overall responsibility for the scheme, the stations were serviced by three small Public Works Department vessels. Coastwatchers were a mix of personnel from all three services, civilian officials (especially Post and Telegraph Department staff), and local volunteers (including many indigenous Pacific people).

Some stations were near villages, but in the many that were isolated life was lonely. Men stared out to sea for hours at a time, the tedium broken only by making weather observations and maintaining radio and other equipment.

In the first year of the Pacific War, coastwatchers at the northernmost stations were at risk of capture by the Japanese. Seven men captured in the northern Gilbert Islands in December 1941 were taken to Tokyo and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. They may have been the first Allied POWs held on mainland Japan.

Seventeen coastwatchers (seven Post and Telegraph radio operators and ten soldiers) captured in the Gilberts in August and September 1942 fared even worse. Along with five European civilians, they were beheaded at Betio on Tarawa on 15 October 1942 after an

American air raid on the atoll, during which one of the prisoners attempted to escape and was shot dead. The civilian coastwatchers were retrospectively given military ranks in 1944 so that their dependants could claim pensions and other rights.

There was another reason for civilian coastwatchers being given military ranks: under international law, civilians found to be undertaking duties of an essentially military character risked being executed as ‘francs tireurs’ (guerrilla fighters). The surviving files suggest that implementation of this change of status was somewhat haphazard. Some civilian New Zealand coastwatchers were not attested into the armed forces until long after this decision in December 1942; a few never were. Nor were the many ‘native coastwatchers’ who were employed as ‘general assistants’ in the Cook Islands on much inferior pay to Europeans; they therefore did not qualify for service medals.

Some of the first New Zealanders put at risk by the failure to make a clear distinction between civilian and military status were the coastwatchers and crewmen sent to the Auckland Islands in March 1940 on the *Tagua*. They were instructed that if they encountered a German raider en route – a definite risk at the time – they were to claim to be a fishing party. Given the radio

equipment, prefabricated huts and bulk supplies on board, this stratagem would not have survived cursory inspection. Fortunately, the only ships sighted by the ‘Cape Expedition’ were Allied merchant vessels. These coastwatchers kept themselves busy (and warm) by making valuable observations of the local weather, wildlife and geology, and surveying the islands.

In 1944, with the action now far away, most of the coastwatching stations in the Pacific were closed; the New Zealand stations were no longer manned. The last New Zealand coastwatchers came home in 1946.



Cook Islands coastwatcher Tai Nicholas operating radio equipment, circa 1941-45. Photograph used with permission of the Nicholas family



Above: Coastwatching headquarters at Nukufetau, Ellice Islands, 1941. Photograph by Donald Leslie Vaughan in D O W Hall, Coastwatchers. Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1951



Left: Government radio station on Rarotonga, circa 1941-45. Photograph by National Publicity Studios in D O W Hall, Coastwatchers. Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1951

Order of Ceremony

KARANGA

Pekaira Rei, Taranaki Whānui

Response by

April Nepia S'ua,
Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou

The Banner of the Royal New Zealand
Corps of Signals is marched in

NATIONAL ANTHEM OF NEW ZEALAND

**Leading Aircraftsman
Matt Mulholland**

Aotearoa
E Ihowā Atua,
O ngā iwi mātou rā
Āta whakarangona;
Me aroha noa
Kia hua ko te pai;
Kia tau tō atawhai;
Manaakitia mai
Aotearoa

God Defend New Zealand
God of Nations at Thy feet,
In the bonds of love we meet,
Hear our voices, we entreat,
God defend our free land
Guard Pacific's triple star
From the shafts of strife and war,
Make her praises heard afar,
God defend New Zealand

KARAKIA

Peter Jackson,
Taranaki Whānui

WELCOME

Chaplain Class 2 David Lacey

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

The Honourable Peeni Henare,
Minister of Defence

WAIATA

Tai Aroha
Ko te aroha anō he wai
E pupū ake ana
He awa e māpuna mai ana
I roto i te whatu-manawa

Ko tōna mātāpuna he hōhonu
Ā inā ia ka rere anō (x2)

He tai timu
He tai pari
He tai ope
He tai roa
He tai nui

Translation

*My love is like water
continually bubbling up
a spring that will keep flowing
from within your soul.*

*Its source is deep within
it has a soothing effect*

*an ebb tide
an incoming tide
a forceful tide
a long-lasting tide
a full tide.*

Composed by James Te Wharehuia Milroy

HISTORICAL READING

Air Vice-Marshal Tony Davies MNZM,
Vice-Chief of Defence Force

Recollections from coastwatcher John
Jones, as told to Bruce M Petty and Peter
McQuarrie
Source: *Voices from the Pacific War: Last
of the Gilbert Islands Coastwatchers* –
Bruce M Petty

HYMN

Be Still My Soul
Leading Aircraftsman Matt Mulholland
*Music by Jean Sibelius
Lyrics by Katherina von Schlegel*

PRAYER

Tua'ipulotu William Cuthers,
Grandson of William Cuthers, a
Cook Islands civilian employed on
Coastwatching duties during the
Second World War

THE WREATH LAYING

The Honourable Peeni Henare,
on behalf of the Government and people of
New Zealand

Bob Nichol,
on behalf of Tarawa Relatives

Tua'ipulotu William Cuthers,
on behalf of Pacific Coastwatchers

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Air Vice-Marshal Tony Davies MNZM,
on behalf of the Chief of Defence Force

David Walsh,
on behalf of New Zealand Post

AJ (Tom) Cormack JP,
on behalf of the Royal New Zealand
Returned and Services Association

ROLL OF HONOUR

Colonel (Rtd) Roger Howard,
National War Memorial Advisory Council

and

**Lieutenant Colonel Jared McGregor
RNZSIGS**,
Commanding Officer,
1st Command Support Regiment
Royal New Zealand Corps of Signals

THE COMMEMORATION

THE ODE IN TE REO MĀORI

A representative from the New Zealand Defence Force

THE ODE IN ENGLISH

AJ (Tom) Cormack JP, District President, Wellington-West Coast-Taranaki Returned and Services Association

LAST POST

The New Zealand flags are lowered to half-mast head

ONE MINUTE SILENCE

ROUSE

The New Zealand flags are raised to full-mast head

March out the Banner of the Royal New Zealand Corps of Signals

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Chaplain Class 2 David Lacey



Coastwatching station at Oteranga Bay, Wellington, 30 December 1942. Image courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Photograph by John Pascoe, Ref: 1/4-000060-F

Memorial to the seventeen New Zealand coastwatchers and five civilians captured in the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) who were murdered on Tarawa on 15 October 1942. Image source NZHistory.govt.nz/media/photo/tarawa-coast-watchers-memorial (US National Archives and Records Administration, USMC Record Group 127)



Roll of Honour

New Zealand Coastwatchers Murdered on Betio Island, Tarawa, 15 October 1942

Private Raymond Arthur Ellis
MiD

Corporal Henry Rexton Cropper
Hearn
MiD

Corporal Arthur Clarence Heenan
MiD

Private Robert Irwin Hitchon
MiD

Private Dallas Hillman Howe
MiD

Private Reginald Jones
MiD

Private Claude Andrew Kilpin
MiD

Corporal John Joseph McCarthy
MiD

Corporal Arthur Ernest McKenna
MiD

Private Roderick Murdoch
McKenzie
MiD

Corporal Thomas Colin Murray
MiD

Private John Hugh Nichol
MiD

Private Charles James Owen
MiD

Private Wilfred Athol Rolf Parker
MiD

Corporal Clifford Arnold Pearsall
MiD

Private Leslie Bruce Speedy
MiD

Lieutenant Allan Leicester Taylor
MiD

Allied civilians murdered on Betio Island, Tarawa, 15 October 1942

Mr Basil Cleary

Mr Isaac R. Handley

Mr Arthur M. McArthur

Mr Reginald G. Morgan
George Medal

Reverend Alfred L. Sadd

New Zealand Coastwatcher on Ocean Island, Gilbert Islands, died in captivity, date unknown

Sergeant Ronald Third
MiD

MiD (Mentioned in despatches)



Above: Post Office radio telegraphists, W B Burt, Chas Hair (Superintendent), W E Farr, C A Glennie and C C Langdale on Chatham Islands, circa 1941-1945. Image courtesy of Alex Glennie, W B Burt Collection



Right: Personnel at coastwatch lookout at Waitangi, Chatham Islands, circa 1941-1945. Image courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Ref: PAColl-1619-01



Coastwatchers at Raoul Island, Kermadec Islands, 1944. Image courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Photograph by John Sorensen, Ref: 1/4-113587-F



Cape Expedition coastwatchers J H Trigger, Laurie H Pollock, Geoff L Prichard, and Alister Duthie above number 2 station at Carnley Harbour, Auckland Islands, 21 Jan 1943. Image courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Photograph by Charles Alexander Fleming, Ref: PA1-q-955-20-1532

This National Commemorative Service was arranged by the Visits and Ceremonial Office, Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs, in partnership with Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa the New Zealand Defence Force, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Manatū Aorere Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



