

4. H.M.N.Z.S. "Arabia" continued her service in the forward area under the control of Commander, South Pacific, until late June, being despatched from Funafuti to Russell Islands on patrol and escort duties. On 20th June, 1945, however, she was detached from the Pacific Fleet and returned to Auckland under the control of the Royal New Zealand Navy for duty, having completed a lengthy service with the United States Forces in the forward area.

5. On her return to Auckland she was required to proceed to Noumea to take over escort duties from H.M.N.Z.S. "Tui" for the return of the 80th M.L. Flotilla from the forward area to New Zealand. Two escort duties were carried out—the first on 6th July in company with "Tui" and six Fairmiles from Noumea to Auckland, calling at Norfolk Island for fuel. The second and similar duty was carried out departing from Auckland on 15th July, for Noumea, again with "Tui" in company, and returning to Auckland with the remaining six Fairmiles on 29th July.

6. With the return of "Arabia" and "Tui" to Auckland ("Kiwi" having returned to Lyttelton in May to refit), the 25th A/S M/S Flotilla concluded its service under Commander, South Pacific, who expressed his deep appreciation for the splendid service rendered by all ships.

7. On completion of refit these vessels were offered by the New Zealand Government for service with the British Pacific Fleet, but, however, were not required. As these vessels are intended to form part of New Zealand's post-war Navy, it was decided that "Kiwi" and "Tui" be employed in the mine-clearance operations in the Auckland area. "Arabia," not being fitted for minesweeping, carried out a brief "showing the flag" cruise of the South Island from 16th October, arriving back in Auckland on 21st November. On 29th November she sailed for Tonga to take part in the Centennial celebrations, and on arrival was placed at the disposal of Her Majesty the Queen. On return to Auckland, "Arabia" was converted to a minesweeper together with "Arbutus" and is at present operating with "Kiwi" and "Tui" on mine-clearance in the Hauraki Gulf.

80TH M.L. FLOTILLA

8. Until July, 1945, the 80th M.L. Flotilla continued its excellent work in co-operation with the United States Forces under Commander, South Pacific, in the forward area. The duties themselves continued to be the same rather monotonous tasks of escorting, screening, and patrolling, which won appreciation for the manner in which they were carried out.

9. In July, however, the services of the Flotilla were found to be no longer required, and the Commander, South Pacific, requested that the Flotilla be returned to the control of the Royal New Zealand Navy. Accordingly, M.L.s 400, 402, 404, 408, 409, and 411, under escort of H.M.N.Z.S. "Tui," sailed from Guadalcanal for Noumea, arriving on 3rd July, 1945. On 5th July, escorted by H.M.N.Z.S. "Arabia," who had arrived from Auckland for the purpose of escorting these vessels, the Flotilla sailed for Auckland, calling at Norfolk Island for fuel, and arrived on 12th July, 1945. The remaining M.L.s—namely, 401, 403, 405, 406, 407, and 410—proceeded under escort of U.S.S.P.C. 1589 from Guadalcanal on 27th July to Noumea, where "Tui" and "Arabia" were waiting to escort them to Auckland. They arrived on 29th July, 1945.

10. On completion of leave and refit, the Flotilla was dispersed and paid off for disposal.

A/S M/S VESSELS IN NEW ZEALAND WATERS

11. As in the previous year, the A/S M/S vessels working in New Zealand waters continued their duties of harbour patrol and minesweeping—the latter mainly in the Auckland area. With the cessation of hostilities, however, the majority of these craft were gradually paid off, leaving only the vessels engaged in the Auckland mine-clearance.