

These vessels are 112 ft. long, with 17 ft. 10 in. beam and 4 ft. 10 in. draught. They have a speed of $18\frac{1}{2}$ knots, their loaded displacement being 80 tons.

Arrangements were immediately made with the wooden-shipbuilding firms in Auckland, and by a combination of the smaller companies construction was commenced with twelve vessels as under, the foundation members being laid in January, 1942, and the twelve keels actually completed and in work by September, 1943:—

Associated Boat Builders, Ltd.	..	..	..	Four boats.
Shipbuilders Ltd.	..	..	..	Three boats.
Chas. Bailey and Son, Ltd.	..	..	..	Three boats.
P. Vos, Ltd.	..	..	..	Two boats.

All the components necessary for the assembly of the hulls were imported from the Fairmile Co., England, excepting such members as keels, stems—in fact, all foundation members—and the whole of the deck planking. Kauri for these members was likely to become a bottleneck, but the Director, State Forest Service, did yeoman work in providing the timber required without any delay worth mentioning.

About 14,000 ft of timber was required per ship. The propelling engines comprised two sets of Hall-Scott twelve-cylinder petrol units developing a maximum of 630 b.h.p. at 2,100 r.p.m., and with such big units fuel-tanks of bullet-proof construction were required on each vessel for 2,320 gallons. This was work on which the shipwrighting tradesmen of Auckland were in their element, and although this construction was novel the vessels were completed in an average of 35,000 man-hours, compared with 40,700 man-hours per unit as the average time communicated to us by the Fairmile Co.

At this time, also, the New Zealand Navy called for the construction of two non-propelled steel oil-barges of similar design to a barge at that time being built for the Union Steam Ship Co. of New Zealand, Ltd. These barges are 180 ft. long by 36 ft. wide and 15 ft. 3 in. in moulded depth. They carry 1,400 tons of oil. Steel and the necessary auxiliary units were procured from Australia and the United Kingdom respectively, and one vessel was actually completed for Navy by the Wellington Patent Slip Co. The other barge was cancelled in the early stages of prefabrication, but has since been built by the Patent Slip Co. for the Union Steam Ship Co., and is now in use at Auckland.

In addition to the above construction, approximately twenty-seven vessels of small dimensions were constructed through the Public Works Department to act as refuelling barges, crash launches, flare-path dinghies, &c., for air bases in New Zealand and in the nearby Pacific islands.

Thus the construction for New Zealand requirements can be summarized as follows, with costs in round figures:—

For New Zealand Navy—	£
Minesweepers, composite (4 at £60,000) ..	240,000
Minesweepers, steel (9 at £60,000) ..	540,000
“ Fairmile ” anti-submarine vessels (12 at £35,000) ..	420,000
Steel oil-barge (1 at £50,000) ..	50,000
Small Vessels for R.N.Z.A.F., &c.—	
Refuelling barges, crash launches, flare-path dinghies,	
&c. (27) ..	20,000
	£1,270,000

AMERICAN PROGRAMME

It was towards the end of 1942 that overtures were made by the American authorities as regards the likelihood of the construction of small craft for them for use in the Pacific area. At that stage, puckered up as we were with our own Navy construction programme, the answer to the question was definitely “No,” but thanks