



Canterbury

CREDIT: CAROL FORSYTH

### CANTERBURY LIVES ON AS A DIVING SITE

The decommissioned Navy frigate *HMNZS Canterbury* was sunk as a diving wreck at Deepwater Cove in the Bay of Islands on Saturday, November 3. The *Canterbury* was the last steam-powered, wide-bodied Leander class frigate built in Scotland for the Royal New Zealand Navy. She was powered by two steam turbines developing 30,000hp through twin shafts.

The keel was laid down on June 12, 1969, and she was launched on May 6, 1970 and commissioned on October 22, 1971.

*HMNZS Canterbury* saw operational service in the Persian Gulf, supporting United Nations sanctions against Iraq and also in East Timor. She also relieved a Royal Navy frigate, *HMS Amazon* (F169), in the Indian Ocean during the Falklands War, and relieved the frigate *HMNZS Otago* at Mururoa atoll during the anti-French nuclear protests in 1973.

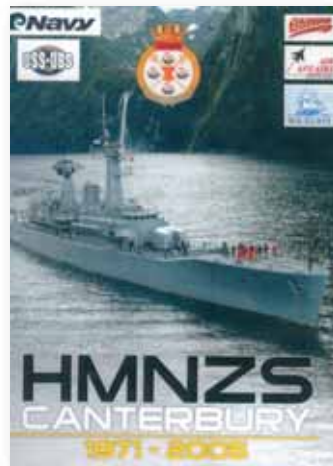
Although a relatively old ship, several tactical and weapon refits over her service life meant that she remained up to date. Her refit in 1998 included changes to accommodate the Navy's new Kaman Seasprite helicopter. Her Phalanx close-in weapon fired 3000 rounds per minute.

A 14-year-old diver and former Sea Cadet, Lucy Hamnett, got to "stomp my foot" and detonate the explosives that sank the ship with a foot pedal from a nearby vessel. Her parents, who moved to the Bay of Islands two months ago from Britain, had paid \$19,200 in a charity auction for the privilege.

The Bay of Islands' newest diving attraction now lies with a slight list to port and, depending on the tide, under 38m to 40m of sparkling water in Deep Water Cove.

There were a few gasps and tense moments as the ship slowly sank, listing dangerously to starboard. Sighs of relief were audible as the vessel suddenly righted herself and slipped smoothly underwater to settle on the bottom 38m below where the flight deck is now at 24m, the bridge at 16m to 18m and foremast, or topmost part of the frigate, now sits 8m below the surface. Unfortunately the wind and tide shifted the ship from her original position and desired depth of 27-30m. This will result in divers needing to take particular care when calculating decompression stops, as the main hull of the ship is in a deep dive situation giving less than nine minutes bottom time with a minimum three minute stop at 5m. Even so, the resulting artificial reef is expected to boost tourism by 15 to 20 percent and become a divers' playground.

To ensure that her history is not forgotten, an old shipmate, Leonard Sears, has produced two DVDs titled *HMNZS Canterbury 1971 – 2005*, and *The Final Voyage Home*. They are available for \$20 each from Leonard Sears. Phone 09 418 1728 or email lsears@xtra.co.nz



### NEW PATROL VESSEL HEADS TO SEA

The *Rotoiti*, the first of the Royal New Zealand Navy's four inshore patrol vessels, sails off Whangarei on November 20 for the first day of contractor sea trials. She was built for the Project Protector programme by Tenix Shipbuilding (NZ) Ltd. The IPV's will conduct maritime surveillance in support of other agencies such as Customs and Fisheries.

The 55m *Rotoiti* is affiliated to the Napier region and is expected to be delivered to the Navy in early 2008. She is under the command of Lieutenant Alistair McHaffie, of Auckland, and her executive officer (second in charge) is Sub-Lieutenant Fraser Toulmin of Napier.

She has a core ship's company of 20, plus four berths



The Rotoiti

PHOTO CREDIT: Tenix

for government agency staff and 12 berths for additional personnel. Her crew will be able to patrol the New Zealand coastline out to approximately 24 miles at speeds of up to 25 knots.