

# BP Recorder

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# BP's Wellington Fleet

By Anne Donald

**Our cover picture shows the BP tug "Taioma"—probably unique as the only operational unit owned by BPNZ to have seen active service in the Second World War.**

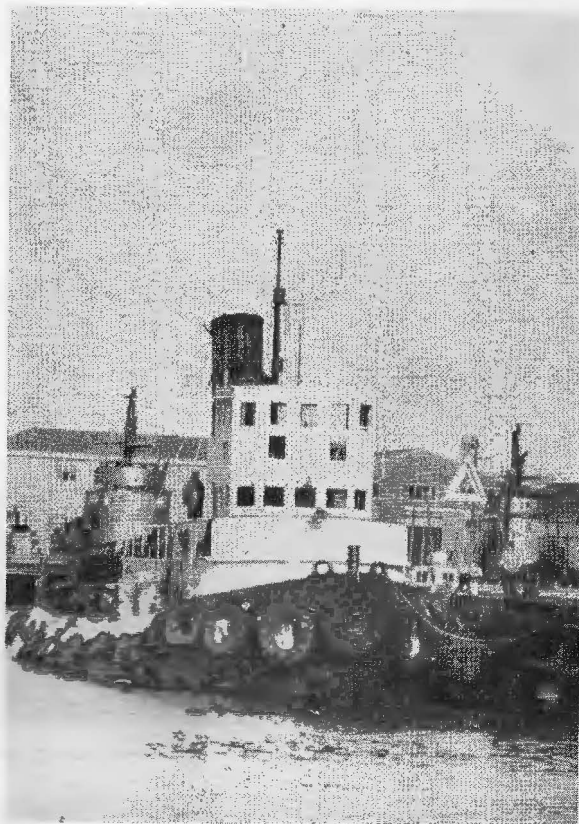
The "Taioma" has been the property of BPNZ since April 1975 when it was purchased from the Union Steam Ship Company, in conjunction with the bunker barge "Hinupahi" and the fuel storage facilities at Miramar. In effect, the responsibility for bunkering vessels in the Port of Wellington was transferred from the Union Steam Ship Company to BP, although the tug is managed by the USSC on behalf of BP.

One of the few remaining steam tugs in this country, "Taioma" was built in Aberdeen for the British Navy in 1944 by A. Hall and Company. Registered in September 1944 her prime duty, we understand, was supporting operations during the invasion of Europe. The "Empire Jane", as she was then known, found her way to Singapore in the closing stages of the war and with her sister ship, "Empire Shirley", was purchased by the Union Steam Ship Company for tug duties in Wellington Harbour. The two tugs were registered in Wellington in September 1947 and in February the following year their names were changed to "Taioma" and "Tapuhi". The "Tapuhi" was sold in 1973 but is understood to be still on duty in the Pacific Islands.

Captain Calvi Freeman, whose lean, youthful appearance belies his almost 45 years at sea, has been master of the "Taioma" for the last five years. He previously served for many years as master on various coastal tankers after service during the Second World War as First Officer, also on tankers.

In Captain Freeman's view, the "Taioma", in spite of her age, is still in first-class condition—good for another 30 years.

Initially an ocean-going tug with a crew of 17, the "Taioma" has been restricted to in-harbour duties since the Wellington Harbour Board tugs "Toia" and "Kupe" came into service. Today with a crew of five, including the Captain, the tug's primary duty is to tow the bunker barge, although in an emergency or when a Harbour Board tug is on survey or under repair she may be called on for more general harbour duties.



**The old and the new—"Taioma" with "Toia" and "Kupe" in the background.**

An interesting feature of the "Taioma" is her double wheel-house—providing upper and lower compartments. The lower wheel-house contains a large traditional wheel, requiring much manpower to turn. A much smaller wheel inset within the larger takes the effort out of steering. A touch on this brings to life a "collector's item" steam engine, mounted behind the wheel, which hisses steam, clanks its pistons up and down and gets on with the business of moving the rudder.

Standing in the upper wheel-house, well up on the superstructure to give the all round view essential in towing operations, Captain Freeman

# People in bunkering – Wellington



**Captain Freeman on the bridge, with the ship's bell (the "Empire Jane") and BP House in background.**



**Main engine-room controls, under the hand of Taioma's Chief Engineer, Theo King.**



**The possible war scars on Taioma's plates.**



Ned Freeman has tended these boilers for some ten years. He wondered if being photographed for publication might not bring bad luck; recalling an earlier shipmate whose many years successful evasion of maintenance costs came to an end when his deserted wife recognised his photo, accompanying an article on his ship.



Jerry Nielsen using a dipstick to check the level of product in storage on the barge "Hinupahi".



Inside the wheel-house of "Taioma". The auxiliary engine to assist rudder movement, fed from the main boilers, can be seen behind the wheel.



Lloyd Black (right) discusses the bunkering schedule with Captain Freeman.



Arthur Andrew at work in the pump room of the Miramar Installation.

spoke of the art of the tug master. The skill is not one easily acquired. Good judgment, quick decision and immediate action are daily requirements. Carefully touching wood, the Captain gratefully acknowledged his "accident-free" years (no more than an occasional bent rail). He reminded himself, however, of a less fortunate predecessor who manoeuvred under the bow of the "Holmlea", neatly erasing the whole upper wheel house.

"Taioma" bears other scars. Plates towards the stern, on the port side, show a series of indentations which the Chief Engineer attributes to a strafing attack by hostile aircraft while the tug was in Singapore. Captain Freeman will neither deny nor confirm this claim. He agrees that the marks could have been made by hostile bullets, but also comments on the results that can come from over enthusiastic rust chipping on a hull which has been at sea for over thirty years.

Below deck is the domain of Chief Engineer, Theo King, whose job it is to keep the engines "ship shape". He commented that in spite of their age the engines had worn well and maintenance was low. The tug is always kept at two hours' steaming notice although the Chief Engineer says that in an emergency enough steam could be generated in half an hour to get the tug moving. Although designed to burn heavy fuel, the "Taioma" has been converted to marine diesel as a pollution reduction measure.

In her role today the "Taioma" can be seen most days with the bunkering barge in tow sailing to and from the Miramar installation and to vessels requiring bunkering.

In earlier days, with "Tapuhi", she played her part in more dramatic scenes; in 1952 towing the "Arahura" to Cook Strait, south of Baring Head, where the former Nelson Ferry was sunk by rocket-firing RNZAF aircraft; in 1956 towing off the "Calm", ashore on the Taranaki coast; in 1959 assisting in the refloating of the "Rangatira" in Tory Channel.

With her bright orange funnel (requiring continual painting—it is the actual flue with no protective outer funnel) and two-tier wheel house, the "Taioma" makes a pleasant picture on the harbour. "Hinupahi" (the barge) on the other hand, is no beauty and definitely not what most people would call the ideal home. But in fact Jerry Nielsen makes the barge his home. Harbour Board rules require that the barge be kept under constant supervision because of the fuel it carries.

In the middle of the barge there sits what ap-

pears to be a large box—from the outside not much, but inside is Jerry's kitchen, lounge, bedroom and bathroom, admittedly small but bright, comfortable and homely. An electric link where the barge ties up at the wharf enables Jerry to have all modern conveniences, including television, and as the living quarters are situated above the boilers, heating is no problem.

The "Hinupahi" and her sister barge the "Hinuwaka" were built in Wellington for the Navy in 1944 and were purchased by the USSC after the war. Hinuwaka, was towed to Auckland for bunkering duties and was bought by BP in 1975.

With a length of 180 feet, a beam of 36 feet, and draft of 12 feet the "Hinupahi" has a cargo capacity of 1,500 tonnes. When bunkering she can attain a pumping rate of 250 tonnes per hour. In the case of a large container vessel requiring 1,000-1,600 tonnes per bunker the time involved can be up to 10 hours.

Older than both the "Taioma" and "Hinupahi" are BP's storage facilities at Miramar where the barge takes on fuel for bunkering. Built in the early 1920s for the Vacuum Oil Company, the facilities were purchased by the Union Steam Ship Company in 1923.

Storage tanks at Miramar have a capacity of approximately 38,000 tonnes and apart from supplying the barge also supply local fishing vessels and a large number of Japanese trawlers.

BP's Superintendent at Miramar is Mr Lloyd Black. Lloyd has been with BP since 1956 and prior to going to Miramar was Assistant Engineer at Head Office. He also held the position of Clerk of Works and was involved with BP's exploration activities at Nuhaka in Hawke's Bay.

The only other full-time staff member at the Installation is Pumpman Mr George Childs. As his title suggests, George is responsible for the pumps and for firing the boiler.

Additional staff are supplied from the Union Steam Ship Company's patent slip when required.

Most of the original plant, installed in 1922, is still in use. Despite its age, however, it runs smoothly and efficiently.

Tug, Barge, and Installation are the three interdependent units that make up the Wellington bunkering service. Without this service both overseas and coastal shipping would suffer significant delays and major expense through each individual vessel having to bunker at either Point Howard or Miramar while in the port of Wellington.

