

ORGANIZATION AND PREPARATION OF H.M.C.S. CAPE SCOTT FOR THE MEDICAL EXPEDITION TO EASTER ISLAND

On the 26 of March, 1964 the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast was informed by message that a request had been received from the Easter Island Expedition Society of Canada for assistance in transporting a Medical Expedition to Easter Island during the winter 1964-65. HMCS CAPE SCOTT was assigned by the Navy to carry out this task.

Authority was given to Commander C.A. Law DSC CD, RCN, to carry out direct liaison with Professor Stanley C. Skoryna, Director of the Expedition and Director of the Gastro-intestinal Research Laboratory at Mc Gill University, to progress planning and finalize details for this medical expedition.

In order that CAPE SCOTT could undertake this commitment, alterations had to be effected and additional equipment had to be procured. At that time CAPE SCOTT's fuel capacity was only 4,441 BBLs. This was increased to 9,000 BBLs. To sail from Panama to Easter Island and then to Valparaiso would take 5,600 BBLs and with this additional capacity the ship had the range cushion for any emergencies. The forward hatch was enlarged to stow 24 pre-fabricated trailers measuring 20' by 20', there was also a requirement to carry these large trailers ashore. The Navy borrowed a 48 foot LCM (landing craft medium) to fulfill this task. Many other items were undertaken at the time so that CAPE SCOTT could meet the task of this interesting expedition to Easter Island.

The planning of the expedition was based on CAPE SCOTT's maximum speed of 10.5 knots. It was agreed that the expedition needed two months on the Island to achieve the objective of the medical mission. Therefore it was planned to sail on November 16, call at San Juan to pick up the American members, and sail through the Panama Canal on November 30, fuelling and departing for our final long voyage to Easter Island on December 1, to arrive there on December 14, Nine days were planned to erect the camp site, install the power

generation equipments, the solar still and the mechanical still. The ship would then depart on a good-will tour of the west coast of South America returning to Easter Island on February 11. It was intended to leave the 24 trailers on the island and therefore it was planned that it would only take four days to embark the members and cargo. The CAPE SCOTT would return to Balboa (Panama) on February 26 and make the transit of the Canal after fuelling on March 1. A good will visit was planned for Curacao on the return trip to Halifax but this was later changed to Cartagena, Colombia. Estimated time of arrival at Halifax would be March 17.

Up to this time Commander Law was on the staff of the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, as special projects officer -METEI. On May 11, he assumed Command of CAPE SCOTT from Commander A.H. Rankin, O.B.E., CD., RCN.

On June 11, 1965, the Commanding Officer and Officers of Cape Scott had their first planning meeting with Dr. Skoryna and Mr. Robert Molson. During this meeting a system was set up with the RCN Supply Depot in Montreal and that in HMC DOCKYARD to marshall all the cargo for Easter Island. A further meeting was held on September 21 in Cape Scott to firm up plans in connection with the Medical Expedition to Easter Island. Dr. Skoryna and Air Vice Marshall John Easton discussed the final plans with the ship's officers and representatives from the Atlantic Command on matters concerning the expedition.

The code word was "METEI" (Medical Expedition to Easter Island), the task of the Supply Officer of HMCS CAPE SCOTT, Lieutenant Commander A.E. Shaw, was to marshall, identify, and load approximately 150 tons of Expedition support equipment.

Progress meetings during May and June, 1964, formulated a master plan resulting in the appointment of Supply Teams at NSD Montreal, NSD Halifax and aboard CAPE SCOTT.

The initial problems were to determine: a) what was to be loaded, b) where the material was to generate from, (i.e. consignors) and c) where the various categories should be stowed in order to effectively off-load in sequence at Easter Island.

A master Load List or "Manifest" was drawn up by the METEI group at McGill University; the list comprised 24 main categories, broken down into alphabetical sub-groups, e.g. Code 14 - Electrical Bower, Code 15 - Water Supply, Code 15A-Water Pumps, etc.

Building D-17 HMC DOCKYARD, Halifax, N.S., was designated as the staging- area where inward shipments from all sources were marshalled.

Lieutenant-Commander Faire and a staff of one storeman plus one METEI member monitored the shipments. Unfortunately, the Logistic Plan was somewhat nullified owing to the non-delivery of material by the originating companies.

As late as October 20, (sailing date November 16) approximately 90 percent of the cargo had not been received. The largest shipment, expected from Alberta, was made up of two carloads of 24 aluminum trailers. Other shipments were due from Vancouver and the Midwest States.

Most of the cargo finally arrived during the week prior to sailing and all teams operated at full speed. One major problem was to control the recording of stowage locations; loading took place so rapidly that supply teams had to split up and record locations in each hold. Later the teams compared notes and made a master listing of cargo stowage.

Many peculiar stowage problems arose such as Super Frozen Culture Media which had to be maintained at -70°F, also films and serum in the ship's main frigidaires.

It is interesting to note that while Logistic Support for METEI was taking place, the supply team was busily engaged storing Cape Scott and preparing her for the four-month cruise.

Twenty seven members of the Medical Expedition to Easter Island joined the ship on Sunday, November 15; the remainder of this very international party would join in San Juan and Balboa. The Expedition was lead by Dr. Stanley G. Skoryna, Montreal and was to consist of 38 members, eight of the party being female members. Surely this was the first time that an RON Ship had taken members of the fairer sex on a prolonged cruise. One of the key men on the Medical team was Surgeon Captain R.H, Roberts, CD, RCN who was accompanied by his wife, Dr. Maureen Roberts, who teaches medicine at Dalhousie University, Halifax.

On Sunday, November 15, a press conference was held in the Wardroom of HMCS CAPE SCOTT for the Expedition.

Monday, November 16, dawned fine and when the ship sailed at 10:00 AM, the weather was perfect. The Chief of Staff (operations), Commodore J.C. Pratt, CD, RCN, together with the senior Canadian

Officer Float Atlantic), Commodore G.C. Edwards, CD, RCN, and Acting Commodore Personnel Atlantic Coast, Captain D.G. Padmore CD, RCN, were on the jetty to give the ship a warm farewell.

The first port of call was Bermuda, where the ship delivered a large trailer for VS 880 Squadron. This huge box was secured forward of the bridge and was so large that it extended the full width of the ship, 57 feet, and so high that it obscured the view from the bridge windows for anyone under six feet. With the trailer and a great deal of Expedition equipment as deck cargo, it was important that Cape Scott attempt to avoid inclement weather. The twenty-four hour and three-day meteorological prognosis charts looked favourable before sailing; unfortunately, a low to the north-west of Newfoundland deepened without warning and the ship was in the midst of a North Atlantic gale that seemed to cover the entire ocean. Winds remained near 60 knots for two days and to avoid damage to the deck cargo, the ship was forced to run to the south-east for 36 hours. After three days, the storm abated and Bermuda was made on November 20. Fortunately, the deck cargo was not damaged; the only loss was 30 hours of time in a rather tight schedule.

The ship berthed at USNOB Bermuda at 6:00 PM on November 20, the trailer was off-loaded and the ship fuelled. The ship sailed for San Juan, Puerto Rico at first light the next morning.

To keep the ship's company and the Expedition members amused in their off-duty moments, a variety of activities were organized; these included movies, bingo, volleyball on the flight deck, swimming in two canvas pools that were built on the forecastle and the flight deck, and "cook-outs".

The ship berthed in San Juan on Tuesday, November 24. The purpose of the visit was twofold; first, to embark six additional members of the Expedition and second, to receive shipments of Expedition stores that failed to generate in Halifax. Unfortunately, after two days, the stores were not forthcoming but the shipping company assured us that they would be on board their next "sea train" arriving at San Juan on the night of November 26. After delaying the ship's sailing for four hours, it was clearly established that the cargo had not left Baltimore. Two subsequent phone calls arranged for the stores to be air freighted to Balboa, Canal Zone.

The ship slipped from the U.S. Naval Base at 1:30 PM on November 27 and headed for the Canal Zone. The storm enroute to Bermuda and the delay in San Juan left the ship 36 hours behind schedule; a following wind and a favourable current enabled the ship to average

11.4 knots and by the night of November 30, the Panama Canal was only four hours steaming away and the ship had regained her schedule.

The first day of December found Cape Scott approaching Cristobal (Canal Zone) for the transit of the Panama Canal. The ship anchored in Cristobal Roads at first light and Commenced the transit at 10:00 AM. It is interesting to note that the locomotives for mules, used to guide ships through the locks in the Canal, have all been replaced by a large and more powerful version built in Japan. These new locomotives have a towing speed of three knots. This is an improvement of one knot over the old type and thus considerably reduces lock transit time.

At the completion of the Canal transit, Cape Scott secured at Rodman, U.S. Naval Base at 6:00 PM and remained there until noon on December 2. This enabled the Medical Expedition to receive the shipment of cargo that had failed to generate in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and complete their last-minute buying.

The early part of the passage to Easter Island was remarkable for the moderate temperatures produced by the Humboldt of Peru Current. When King Neptune and his Court boarded on the forenoon of December 5, there was some speculation as to whether the ship was crossing the Equator or the Antarctic Circle. Cold weather did not, however, deter King Neptune and as ninety percent of the ship's Company (included the Captain) were "tadpoles", his Doctor, Barber and Bears were kept very busy.

As Cape Scott neared her destination, preparations for the establishment of the camp on Easter Island became more intense. At a series of meetings between the Captain's staff, led by the Operations Officer for the Project, Lieutenant-Commander C.D. Gillis, CD RON, and the Expedition's Physical Plant Director, Air Vice-Marshal J. Easton RCAF (retired) the details of "over the beach" and camp construction operations were hammered out. On Monday, December 7, the Operation Order was completed and the ship's company and Medical Expedition were mustered for a briefing on "OPERATION METEI". The Captain made a few introductory remarks and the Operations Officer explained the aims and overall plan of the operation and then gave the plans to the Team Captain, who briefed on their specific tasks,

The Team Captains were as follows:

Lieutenant-Commander GILLIS	Operation Officer.
Lieutenant-Commander BILLARD	Installation Superintendent
Lieutenant-Commander MOORE	Beach Master
Lieutenant-Commander THOMPSON	Cargo Officer
Lieutenant-Commander SHAW	Logistics Coordinator
Lieutenant-Commander PENNIE	Support Group Co-ordinator.

The primary role of CAPE SCOTT upon reaching Easter Island was the setting up of the Expedition camp together with all "essential" services. The time allocated for this was a period of six full working days.

The remaining days at sea were used to brief individual teams and check and prepare equipment and stores. By Saturday, December 12, the ship's company was ready and looking forward to this new and exciting challenge. Some members of the Expedition however, appeared a little apprehensive; perhaps it was the thought of two months ashore without the comforts of CAPE SCOTT close at hand.