A notable addition to the New Zealand merchant fleet during the year ended 31st March, 1947, is the turbo electric vessel "Hinemoa," which entered the Wellington–Lyttelton express steamer service early in 1947. She is of nearly similar dimensions to the "Rangatira," built in 1931, but incorporated many improvements in detail, both in her amenities for passengers and crew and in her technical design. "Hinemoa" is one of the first important post-war liners built in the United Kingdom. Under a new name, "Hwalein," of Shanghai, the veteran passenger-steamer "Maori" entered during 1946 a further period of usefulness as a passenger-steamer trading in the China Seas. The "Maori" was built by Denny and Co., of Dumbarton, in 1907, and for nearly forty years under that name she had traded in the Wellington–Lyttelton express steamer service without serious mishap. The "Maori" was distinguished as the pioneer fast triple-screw turbine steamer in New Zealand coastal waters.

The passenger-steamer "Maunganui" was sold to Greek owners during the year and renamed "Cyrenia." "Maunganui" was built in Scotland in 1911 for the Wellington–San Francisco mail-service. She was employed as a troop transport during the 1914–18 war and was a hospital ship during the 1939–45 war.

The New Zealand trans-Pacific cargo service has been augmented by the large American-built vessel "Waitemata."

In Auckland Harbour the ferry fleet has been enlarged during the year by two vehicular ferries, "George Peat" and "Frances Peat." Both vessels are propelled by Diesel engines. The hulls were built in Australia, and the vessels were originally used in the Hunter River, New South Wales, ferry service. Both vessels were delivered from Australia to Auckland under their own power and without abnormal incident. Structural alterations have been made at Auckland to fit these vessels to suit local conditions. Each vessel can carry 45 cars and 300 passengers in Auckland river limits with a service speed of 12 knots.

There has been much activity in the building of the small class of off-shore trawler propelled by Diesel engines. These vessels average about 50 ft. to 55 ft. in length, are single screw, and of about 30 tons to 35 tons gross and slightly under 10 tons register. They are fitted with a trawl winch and the usual trawling-gear. The design and construction of these vessels have been approved by the Marine Department. They are not required by law to be subsequently surveyed periodically by the Department when of a register tonnage not exceeding 10 tons, nor for the same reason are they subject to the statutory requirements as to certificated officers and the manning scale. Timber, and particularly kauri, has been hitherto the staple material for the construction of these small ships in New Zealand. The present acute shortage of first-class kauri suitable for shipbuilding has presented a hard problem to the local shipbuilders, and there has been of necessity a search for alternative materials for the construction of these vessels. Two Auckland engineering firms have therefore developed satisfactorily designs of trawlers of all-welded steel construction which have been approved by the Department. The general design has undoubtedly produced an efficient trawler embodying a standard of living-conditions conducive to the improved comfort and health of the crews. Six steel trawlers were designed and built privately in Auckland under the Marine Department's supervision to the account of UNRRA, South-west Pacific area. They have recently been shipped to Shanghai for service in Chinese coastal waters. As yet there is insufficient operating experience to forecast any reliable comparison of the overall efficiencies between the all-welded steel trawler and the traditional wood trawler.

If, however, the present stringency in the supply of indigenous timbers for shipbuilding continues, both the fishing and coastal shipping interests and the shipbuilders also will be compelled to use either imported timber or imported steel plates and sections. Apart from new wood construction, the maintenance of existing wood ships in a satisfactory state of repair necessitates at present the approval of the Timber Controller to the release of supplies of the necessary timber to effect repairs.