

COVERING THE ACHILLES WELCOME

The Work Behind The Broadcasts

EARLY on the morning of Friday, February 23, tens of thousands of New Zealanders tumbled out of bed much earlier than usual to hear the broadcast of the arrival of the H.M.S. Achilles in Auckland, the return of the ship that had covered herself with glory in the battle on the River Plate. The broadcast from the National Broadcasting Service was one of the most successful ever put over in New Zealand, but how many listeners gave any thought to the preparations that had been made for giving them this intimate link with what was happening in Auckland? They just turned the knob and got the proceedings. They could hear the voice of the announcer, Clive Drummond, who covered the early morning portion of the welcome, and the helper who clearly knew all about the Navy. They could picture quite easily the movement of the ship going up the gulf, moving slowly up the harbour, and berthing, and they could hear the cheering of the crowd.

Preliminaries

Well, Clive Drummond left Wellington by the Limited on Wednesday, arrived at Auckland at 10 a.m. next day, and spent the whole of that day until late that night making arrangements with the station staff at 1YA for the broadcast on the morrow. He and the Station Engineer went to the Naval Depot at Devonport and saw the authorities there; then back to town to make arrangements with the Harbour Board for the use of the wharf and the signal station; then to the Town Clerk for passes for the cars to move in Queen Street for the civic reception later in the day; then to the Post and Telegraph Department to make arrangements for lines for the separate broadcasting points; then to the Public Service authorities for the necessary cars. Back at 1YA, there was the gear to assemble, microphones, stands, extensions, and a hundred and one other things for the engineer to arrange so that each point would be provided with a technician who knew exactly what was required.

Up In The Morning Early

Another question arose. How was Mr. Drummond to get to Mt. Victoria signal station at Devonport in time for the first broadcast at 5.45 next morning? There was no vehicular ferry so early. He had to arrange for the relay equipment to be taken across that night and the car garaged. Then he found that a launch left with the morning papers at four o'clock, so he decided to take this. Mr. Drummond himself did not bother to go to bed. He curled up on a settee in the studio with his clothes on and snatched a few hours sleep. There was a spot of trouble with the alarm clock during the night because wind coming through the open window blew it over, and ultimately he and the engineer got up rather too early. While they

waited for the launch at the ungodly hour of three o'clock they watched some men fishing. (Does this craze ever stop?). The morning was calm and clear. At Devonport they picked up Lieutenant Thompson of the Naval Base, and they went to the top of Mount Victoria and described the approach of the Achilles through the calm waters of the gulf.

Help From The Navy

Lieutenant Thompson was a find. He supplied the expert knowledge that went so far to make



Broadcasting the parade (below), from the verandah of Lewis Eady's Building. Courtenay Hall, 1YA announcer, is in the centre of the group

the broadcast of the arrival the success it was, and he had a most suitable voice and personality for the radio. The best thanks of the NBS are due to him and to the rest of the staff of the Naval Base for uniform kindness and courtesy before and during the broadcasts.

Indeed everybody in Auckland was helpful. Having brought the Achilles, so to speak, into the harbour, Mr. Drummond and Lieutenant Thompson had to rush back to town, and the gear had to be dismantled and taken over and set up for the third relay point in Queen Street. Mr. Drummond and his helper went to the Central Wharf where they used the second relay point to describe the actual berthing of the warship. There was a break at 7.15 a.m. until the next broadcast at 9.40 a.m., and Mr. Drummond took the opportunity to make contact with several of the Achilles' crew who would broadcast a few words to their people. This enabled Mr. Drummond to comply with the request from the ABC that an Australian member of the crew should be asked

to broadcast. The ABC had asked to be allowed to re-broadcast the welcome.

In The Nick of Time

On again at 9.40 a.m. for a welcome on the quarter-deck by the Governor-General, Lord Galway. Then the procession moved off to the Town Hall, and Courtenay Hall took over the description on the way from Lewis Eady's balcony. Then came the most difficult job of all. Mr. Drummond had to get from the wharf to the Town Hall through packed streets. At first he could not get into the hall at all, but after a hard fight he succeeded, through a back door. He actually reached the spot where the relay was set up just in time to hear Mr. Hall say, "We will now switch you over to Mr. Drummond at the Town Hall." Mr. Drummond did not have much breath left, but he managed to hold out until the official speeches began. The speakers were: The Mayor of Auckland, Sir Ernest Davis, the Hon. P. Fraser, Deputy Prime Minister, M. Pouquet, Consul for France, the Hon. F. Jones, Minister of Defence, the Chairman of the Harbour Board, and Mr. Tai Mitchell on behalf of the Maori people; and Captain Parry of the Achilles replied.

The Miracle Happened

Mr. Drummond left Auckland by the Limited that night, and was back on duty in Wellington on Saturday afternoon, tired but happy in the knowledge that combined efforts had resulted in a worthwhile job of work. Meanwhile arrangements had been made—as a matter of fact Mr. Drummond started them — for Captain Parry to broadcast from 1YA on the Friday evening.

That is how the broadcast came to you. You turned a knob and the miracle happened.

