

catching to play a brief role as a minesweeper when, off Red Head, she discovered a German mine which had broken adrift from the field laid off North Cape by the German raider *Wolf*. The *Hananui II* was at the time under the command of Neville Cook who, with some members of his crew, attached a line to the mine and towed it into a cove in the Bay of Islands where it was later disposed of by the Navy, an act of unprecedented danger for which Cook received a medal for meritorious service.<sup>38</sup>

Whaling at Whangamumu recovered after the war and indeed 1927 was a record season with 74 whales taken, but this was a success that was never repeated. Thereafter there was a steady decline in both the catches and the value of the products of the station for which there were several reasons.

Economic depression was just around the corner, paraffin and tallow were in competition with whale oil and electricity was in vogue rather than lamps. However, probably the greatest impact upon the industry was the arrival in 1923 of the huge Norwegian floating whale factories which began whaling in the Ross Sea under an arrangement with the New Zealand government. In the seasons of 1929/30 and 1930/31 they had taken a total of no less than 3265 whales, creating an inevitable decline in their numbers and, as well, a serious over-production of the end products.

In the 1930 season the catch at Whangamumu fell to 31 whales and, because of falling prices and inability to dispose of their products, the Whangamumu station ceased their operations in 1932.<sup>39</sup> In the season of 1933 only three whales were taken and these only for the purpose of recording a movie film on the whaling industry. Reporting the decline in the industry, the Secretary for Marine stated that the sales of whale oil were improving and that he expected the industry to recover in the next season,<sup>40</sup> but this was not to be. Although the Tory Channel whalers continued with a catch in the 1934 season of 52 whales, the Secretary for Marine only briefly noted that 'the station at Whangamumu is still closed down'.<sup>41</sup>

It never reopened. Te Awaiti remained the last surviving whaling station in New Zealand and in 1940 a record catch there of 107 whales evidently prompted a spirit of renewed optimism at Whangamumu. The Secretary reported 'preparations have been made during the year to resume operations at the old station at Whangamumu where the fishery has not been carried on since 1932',<sup>42</sup> but once again the Secretary's optimism was misplaced and no more was heard of resuming operations at Whangamumu.

With these brief official comments, an unique whaling operation on the New Zealand coast disappeared after 42 years of operating at Whanga-