

**Pattern: Modified Flower Class Corvettes;** Introduced in to NZ Service: 1944; Withdrawn: 1948

Name	Builder	Completed	NZ Service
<b>Arabus</b> (K385)	George Brown & Co, Greenock.	16/3/44	22/2/44 to 9/49
<b>Arbutus</b> (K 403)	ditto	5/7/44	16/6/44 to 9/48

Tonnage: 980 std; Dimensions: 208.25 x 193 x 33.2 x 17.5 ft (63.5 x 58.8 x 10.1 x 5.3 m).

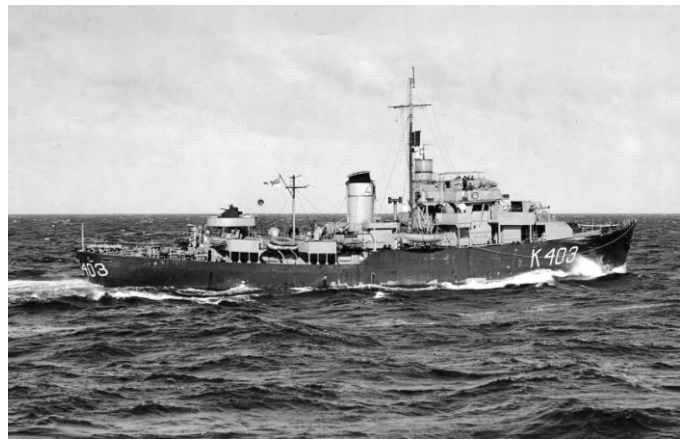
Machinery: 1 shaft, oil fired 4 cylinder reciprocating triple expansion, 2880 ihp; Speed: 16 knots.

Armament: Guns – 1 x 4 in, 8 x 20 mm, Hedghog AS mortars, 72 depth charges.

Complement: 85.



HMNZS Arabis



HMNZS Arbutus

### NZ Service

In 1943, New Zealand was seeking more escort ships for the RNZN. The Royal Navy offered *Arbutus* and her sister ship *Arabis* as a gift to the RNZN. These Corvettes were a rugged simple design that was meant for wartime construction needs and to meet the need for escort vessels for the Atlantic convoys. The design based on a 1936 whale chaser incorporated the lessons that had been learnt in anti-submarine warfare up to 1943. They were adapted to operate in tropical conditions for NZ service. This class was developed in 1942 from the Flower-class corvettes and many were built in Britain and Canada between 1942 and 1944. They were very seaworthy vessels and had incorporated developments that improved their usefulness as anti-submarine patrol and escort ships in both coastal and ocean waters.

*Arabis* was laid down on 26 February 1943 and launched at the George Brown & Co shipyards at Greenock, Scotland on 28 October 1943. She was commissioned into RNZN service on 22 February 1944 and completed by 16 March 1944. As the ship neared completion New Zealand sailors arrived to man the ship with RN personnel. She was commissioned into the RNZN on 22 February 1944 under the command of Lieutenant Commander J.H. Steelye RNZNVR. *Arabis* completed her workup on 27 April 1944 and departed from Greenock on 23 May 1944 and arrived at Devonport naval base on 15 August 1944. Upon arrival she was taken into the dry dock for a refit then visited Wellington, Lyttleton and Dunedin in November 1944.

She departed for her war service with the RNZN on 26 November 1944 from Auckland for the Solomons via Tonga and Noumea, arriving at Renard Sound on 14 December 1944. On 16 December 1944 *Arabis* replaced HMNZS *Matai* as Senior Officer 25<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla then based in the Solomons consisting of HMNZS *Tui*, *Kiwi*, and *Breeze*. She remained in the area until April-May 1945 when a detachment operated in the Ellice Islands off Funafuti.

On 12 June 1945 *Arabis* departed Guadalcanal for Auckland via Noumea and arrived on 20 June 1945. In July, she undertook two round trips to Noumea to escort back to Auckland with HMNZS *Tui* two groups of six Fairmile B motor launches.

In the post-war period she went on 35-day show the flag cruise to seven South Island ports and to Wellington in October-November 1945. She then took passage to Tonga for a cruise and visit in December 1945. In January 1946, she was refitted as a minesweeper to take over with *Arbutus* the clearing of the Hauraki Gulf minefields along with HMNZS *Kiwi*, and the danlayers HMNZS *Waiho*, *Waima*, and *Waipu* as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla. Beginning in early March it was completed on 4 June 1946. From there she was paid off in reserve on 25 July 1946.

On 27 January 1948 *Arabis* was recommissioned and took part in the 1948 Waitangi Day celebrations on 6 February alongside *Arbutus* before sailing for England in April 1948 where her crew transferred to the new Loch Class Frigates.

*Arabis* was towed to Harwich and sold for scrap. In August 1951 she was broken up by T.W. Ward at Grays, near Tilbury.

***Arbutus*** was laid down in May 1943 and launched at the George Brown & Co shipyards at Greenock, Scotland on 26 January 1944. She was commissioned into RNZN service on 16 June 1944 and was completed by 5 July 1944. She sailed for New Zealand on 1 August 1944 via the Panama Canal, San Diego and Fiji where south of Viwa Island she was run aground on a shoal on 7 October 1944. She was doing at 15 knots at the time the shoal was struck and it caused major damage to the ship including the loss of the rudder. Two United States Navy vessels rescued her and took her under tow to Suva where HMNZS *Aroha* took her on 20 October 1944 for Auckland.. *Arbutus* was taken to Lyttelton where she was repaired by April 1945 and returned to Auckland early May 1945.

In May 1945 *Arbutus* was offered to the British Pacific Fleet. She sailed for Sydney to be fitted out as a radio and radar maintenance ship. This increased her complement to 102 officers and men. She joined the Fleet Train in Japanese waters at the end of July 1945. She spent the next three months of repair work and escort duties and she was present at Hong Kong for the formal Japanese surrender. In September she was released from the British Pacific Fleet and returned to Auckland in October 1945.

In the post war period she undertook scientific work and minesweeping duties in the Hauraki Gulf as well as courtesy visits to the Pacific Islands. She departed NZ in April 1948 for England where she was decommissioned and broken up in 1951.

**Acknowledgements:** *New Zealand Naval Vessels* by RJ McDougall.

<http://navymuseum.co.nz/hmnzs-arabis-flower-class-corvette/>

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