

A sailor at heart

Cardiologist Dr Nick Fisher knows almost as much about ports and oceans as he does about hearts. Head of cardiology for the Nelson-Marlborough DHB, he is a former surgeon commander of all Britain's armed forces.

Fisher, 46, from Salisbury in England, joined the Royal Navy in 1991. Completing his training as a cardiologist, he served on frigates in the Falklands post-war, during the Bosnia conflict and during the second Gulf war.

His speciality is inserting stents, or interventional cardiology, a technique he says used to be very dangerous and required the onsite back-up of a bypass surgeon.

After 18 years in the Navy, he opted to leave. Quality of life drew him to New Zealand. 'I noticed that whenever we sailed south of Gibraltar, the world always seemed a nicer place to live in,' he says. 'There are lots of ex-forces in New Zealand. It's more English than England!'

He asked a New Zealander he knew where he should settle. He was told: Tauranga, Napier-Hastings or Nelson. He wrote to each hospital board. Nelson was performing angiography, and won the day. He emigrated in 2006, and Nelson thus became the first rural hospital in New Zealand to have interventionist heart surgery.

Fisher's professional life is something of a family affair. His wife, Dr Tammy Pegg, an Oxford University-educated cardiologist, works on his team. His mother runs his private practice, and his father, a former Royal Navy pilot, runs his other passion, a 4.5-hectare Mahana Hills vineyard and winery. He grows unusual grape varieties – semillon, tempranillo and gamay noir – for his Five Rows label.

'We've always had boats in our family,' he says. But all this leaves little time for boating.



▶ Nelson's Dr Nick Fisher (foreground) leaving the RFA Argus by tender in the Gulf at the end of the war. The ship has onboard a fully equipped 100-bed hospital.



▶ Ill-fated cruise ship Costa Concordia righted and ready for the scrap yard.