

# From Rover Scout to Navy Commando

One Man's Service in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve

August 1942 to April 1946



*Arthur Daniel James Lunan*  
*Sub Lieutenant RANR*

## INTRODUCTION

World War 2 veteran Arthur Lunan has left us a remarkable and invaluable record of the various aspects of his long and eventful life. A first-hand account stretching from his childhood in the dire days of the Great Depression to the second decade of a new millennium and spanning some of the most momentous events of the war in the Pacific.

Remarkable for their detail, they include descriptions in his own words of the periods immediately preceding his enlistment in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, his subsequent training prior to his first posting and, from the contents of his Midshipman's Journal, his experiences aboard HMAS Kanimbla . The remainder of his wartime service has been pieced together from the results of research into a variety of archival sources.

It is this portion of his life story that is the subject of this document – the journey of a seventeen year old butcher's helper from the leafy suburbs of Sydney to the beaches of war-torn South-East Asia. It has been divided into three sections reflecting the various stages of his own personal wartime odyssey:

### Chapter 1:            From Rover Scout to Midshipman

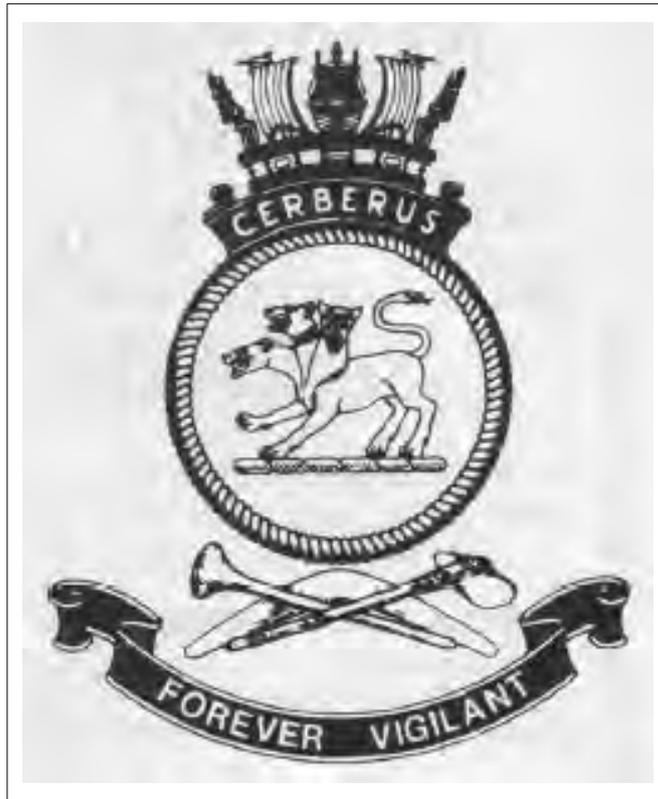
The description of life as a child of the Great Depression in suburban Sydney during the early years of World War 2; his later enlistment followed by basic training at Flinders Naval Depot, Victoria and subsequent selection for 'Special Services' training at HMAS Assault, Port Stephens NSW; his commission as a Midshipman and subsequent posting to His Majesty's Australian Ship Kanimbla on January 12th 1944.

### Chapter 2:            A Midshipman's Journal

Kanimbla was a former coastal passenger liner requisitioned for war service and converted firstly to an armed merchant cruiser and later to L.S.I. (Landing Ship Infantry). As a RANR Midshipman (and later, Sub Lieutenant), Arthur was required to keep a daily journal for the duration of his time aboard. This chapter contains extracts from this journal, concentrating on the more compelling incidents and observations, some being accounts of actions under fire in the South-West Pacific Theatre .

### Chapter 3:            After Kanimbla

Arthur's next posting was to Far North Queensland to train for upcoming amphibious operations in the South-West Pacific with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Beach Group (Commando). After long months of training he is involved in combined operations on Morotai and Borneo, embedded with an Army unit during Allied landings and mopping up operations in Borneo. His transfer to HMAS Glenelg at the end of hostilities sees Arthur involved with the transfer of control in British North Borneo from Japanese occupation forces and the repatriation of Australian prisoners of war.



Insignia for Flinders Naval Base  
(HMAS Cerberus)



Insignia of HMAS Assault  
Shore Establishment

# Chapter 1: From Rover Scout to Midshipman

Arthur begins:

At the age of sixteen, I was able to obtain a license to ride a motorbike, so my employer (*a local Sydney butcher*) bought a Triumph with a box side-car for me to do the home deliveries with. This service was a considerable part of the business in the days before housewives drove their own cars and there were no supermarkets.

Scouting was still a big part of my life and my main recreation. Many weekends involving camps, competitions and other scouting activities were spent with mates, all scouts or Rovers like me. It was not until I was seventeen that I at last asked a girl out – for a cruise around Sydney Harbour on a yacht, organised by 2nd and 3rd Lindfield Rover Crew. I bravely asked her out again – this time to the pictures on a Wednesday, one of my few free nights.

All this took place toward the end of 1940 with the war starting to affect our everyday lives. Petrol was rationed and home deliveries were banned to any house within a mile of the shop. Still, there were now coupons required for many things like fuel and clothing, so there existed a lively trade for what was wanted.

Conscription at age eighteen had taken up many youths who would otherwise have been looking for work. Whilst there had been no money available to reduce unemployment before 1940, suddenly there was plenty to put into the war effort.

As far back as my memory goes, I had always wanted to join the navy. This had been influenced by my grandfather Daniel William Cahill (Bill), who had been a member of the naval forces that occupied German New Guinea in late 1914<sup>1</sup>. Grandfather gave me a sailor's cap when I was about six years old and I wore it proudly for a while until its size defeated me and it disappeared into the limbo of forgotten things.

## Enlistment

Approaching the age of twelve in 1936 and doing well at Chatswood Primary School, I had sent for the application forms to become a Cadet Midshipman. When my father read a penalty clause which required a refund of the £75 should the cadet be dismissed for any breach of discipline, he immediately knocked the idea on the head – any threat to his beer money was to be avoided at all costs!

Come World War II and in 1940, aged 16, I tried to enlist but was told to come back next year. At 17 it was possible to join the navy with parental consent, but Dad withheld permission until an army call-up was approaching. Finally in July 1942, aged 17 and 10 months, I enlisted and was called-up on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August.

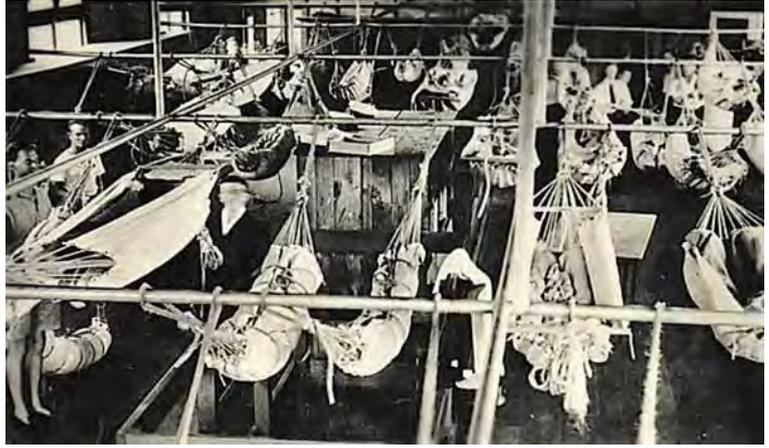
A band of a dozen young adventurers mustered at Central Station (*Sydney*) on the last afternoon; goodbyes were said to parents, family and girlfriends. We joined a steam train for the first leg of a long trip to Flinders Naval Depot at the southern end of Victoria. A group of Queensland recruits were already aboard having spent most of the day wandering around Sydney, and some were a bit under the weather. At that time I didn't smoke or drink, was a Rover Scout and, until the previous week, had been a Troop Leader with a King's Scout Badge. The world was about to open up for me.

## Flinders Naval Depot

In my group was an old schoolmate from North Sydney Boys' High, Alex Johnston, so we naturally stuck together. The trip seemed endless with a change at Albury for the break in gauge<sup>2</sup>. Finally we arrived at Flinders Street Station, Melbourne and changed again for Cribbe Point, our contingent bolstered by a large number of Victorians.

I find it hard to remember the feeding arrangements on the trip, but at last Flinders Naval Base was reached. Several important people – Petty Officers as we later discovered – with much shouting organised us into groups according to classification: Seamen, Cooks, Signallers etc., and then formed these groups into classes of about thirty. Johnno and I were in Class 160 and allocated to F Block in the New Entry School.

Each block contained a number of dormitories and ablution facilities and was home to two classes. Furniture was spartan – wooden tables and benches set out in a T-shape, hammock rails above, a hammock bin in one corner and clothing lockers down one wall – small lockers, as all a sailor's gear (rig) is folded, nothing hanging up. There was also a dryer and a heap of mess gear set out on a table in a planned array.



(AWM photo)

The floor in this fairly old building was of highly polished timber – the work of many recruits over the years.

The first issue on arrival was a hammock already stencilled with our names and containing one large beautiful woollen blanket – supply your own pyjamas. The hammock was slung between the rails at night about six feet above the deck and was comfortable to sleep in – with practice! We soon learned not to roll about when asleep – the first few nights there were a number of crashes and groans.

Next came the all-important 'Police Card', to be carried at all times in the depot and to be left with the Police Office if leaving the base for any reason. Recruits over 25 had a red line on their card which allowed them to use the 'wet' canteen<sup>3</sup> – under 25, you could only use the 'dry' canteen. I don't remember any other concerns for the welfare of the young recruits – some only just 17 – during my time in the navy and this attitude was rather hypocritical, as I later discovered.

Meals were good, cooked in a huge galley with up-to-date facilities and drawn for each meal by rostered mess-cooks from each class according to numbers present. Tea and cake at 4.00 pm was the one luxury we enjoyed.

The day started with a bugle call at 6.00 am ... quickly lash up the hammock with the regulation seven turns of the lashing rope, place same in the bin, shave, shower, dress, breakfast, clean up the dormitory and then parade at 8.00 am sharp. This was a breeze for me after three years of butchers' hours.

Uniforms were not issued for a couple of days, so we paraded as a motley-looking bunch. Some recruits who had transferred from the army and R.A.A.F. were wearing their old uniforms, but soon we were all dressed as sailors with the old gear parcelled up and posted home.



*Cadet A. Lunan,  
Cribbe Point, 1942*

A Leading Seaman (L/S), quite a middle-aged man he seemed to us, was our instructor and mentor for the first two weeks. Drill, also called field exercise, went on all day. Some of the ex-army lads were good at it and the L/S used them as examples to smarten up the rest of us. During smoke-o, he would answer our questions about various badges of rank and manual procedures. As our knowledge of things Naval improved, such as the comprehensive slang terms, we began to feel like old hands very quickly. There was little contact with officers. They were god-like beings who took charge of large parades, carried out inspections and generally hardly knew a recruit existed.

For us, the Non-Commissioned Officers (N.C.O.'s) were our immediate authority. If necessary, through a Petty Officer, a recruit could put in a request to the Divisional Officer for such things as a leave pass if he was under 18.

To handle the ordinary problems of life such as laundry, a number of coppers and tubs were provided where some learned the hard way not to boil coloureds with whites and socks not at all! Thieving from clothes lines was rife, so classes organised rostered watchdogs while their clothes aired.

After the first three weeks at Flinders, weekend leave was allowed every second weekend so we came to know Melbourne and its weather pretty well. My pay as an Ordinary Seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (O.D.II – i.e. under 18) was 4/2d (4 shillings and two pence – about 42 cents) per day. At 18 as an O.D.I, it went up to 6/- (about 60 cents) – no fortune but it got me by. A bed at a TocH<sup>4</sup> cost just 10 pence per night and cheap meals were available to service personnel in subsidised places. Public transport was free to all members of the armed forces.

For good or ill during these leaves I, like many other young men away from home, learned about drinking. Perhaps it would have happened anyway, war or not, but it certainly caused me some problems for much of my life. Melbourne was full of servicemen, including Americans on leave from Guadalcanal with lots of money. There seemed to be a lot of girls about as well – it must have been a tough time for parents.



*Weekend leave with Alex Johnston (left)  
Melbourne 1942*

Our initial training program lasted for three months and included instruction in seamanship, torpedoes, rifle and machine guns, boat pulling and lots of field exercise. After initial training, various specialist courses could be applied for.

While our training was continuing, other things were taking place. An intake of recruits in September 1942 were allocated to something called "Special Service". Rumour had it that this group was to be trained in commando tactics and become part of a unit based on the British Combined Operations – all exciting stuff to healthy young men. Several of us applied for transfer to this group believing that it would be a quick way to get into the war. However our Divisional Officer, Lt. Dickson, rejected our requests, pointing out that our intake were Officers Training School (O.T.S.) candidates – something that was quite strange to us and a little frightening for someone with no financial backing.

This O.T.S. thing came as quite a surprise. We knew that it existed as it was on its fourth intake of sixty recruits per course. They were kept well apart from the rest of Flinders Naval Depot, wore white 'tallies'<sup>5</sup> and were roundly criticised by the other groups.

Not many would volunteer for that, so groups had to be allocated to it. During the initial training period cadets were subjected to several interviews conducted by senior officers. As it turned out, the purpose was to identify potential candidates for officer training. The number of possibles was gradually reduced so that each three months a pool of sixty was available to form the next intake, divided into two watches – port and starboard. Of those sixty, only thirty would graduate to become midshipmen if under 19½ years and sub-lieutenants if over that age. (Someone must have dreamed this one up over a few gins after a mess dinner!)

There were plans afoot for combined operations in the islands held by the Japanese and casualties were expected to be high. Young reservist officers could do this job rather than use up the relatively small number of highly trained permanent service officers. Looking back, it can be seen that some very capable officers resulted from this mass production system.

Nearing the end of our New Entry Training, Alex Johnston, Berry Spooner and myself tried to get off the O.T.S. list and get into the Gunnery School. The Divisional Officer blew his stack and refused our requests – perhaps too many were opting out of the O.T.S. and numbers were hard to maintain. As it happened, Johnno failed the next board and Berry and I stayed in.

### Officer Training School

The New Entry Course for 160 Class finished in mid-November and various drafts were handed out. Bluey Jamieson scored well, being drafted to HMAS Shropshire to join her in England. Most others were drafted back to their home cities for further assignment to ships or courses. It was an exciting but also regretful time as we said goodbye to good friends, hoping to run across each other as the war progressed. Berry Spooner and myself were waiting to enter the 6<sup>th</sup> course of the Officer Training School with some others from 160 Class. This we did at the end of November after a couple of weeks of doing nothing much – a fairly common situation in all the services.

Our entry into O.T.S. was not exactly welcoming. We sixty hopefuls were paraded before the C.O., Commander Harris R.N. With the help of some strong language, he told us of the impossible task he had been given – to turn us into Naval Officers in nine weeks. In this he intended to succeed – any breach of the rules and that cadet rating was immediately out. We soon found he was as good as his word and boys were soon being weighed off for various indiscretions. For the nine weeks of the course we were confined to our school – no leave, except for Christmas.

The day started smartly at 6.00 am – stow hammocks, grab a cup of kai (cocoa) and fall in on the road by 6.10 in P.T. gear; a cross-country run of some miles; shower, shave, dress in rig of the day; breakfast, then clean the galley and fall in on the parade ground at 8.00 am. Cadets took turns at taking parade as they did with various duties such as stoking the boilers at night.

Most mornings, after parade, came an hour of signals exercises – morse code by aldis lamp and semaphore by flags. This was followed by field exercises – rifle drill and marching under the guidance of Chief Petty Officer Palmer, a Whale Island Gunner's Mate known as 'Ming', for obvious reasons<sup>6</sup>. For three weeks field exercises were continued for most of the forenoon, all of the afternoon watch and usually the first dog watch<sup>7</sup> – about nine hours a day. We became very good at it and impressed the Governor of Victoria who inspected us one day.

At night, we had lectures on naval history, ward room etiquette, navigation, gunnery, torpedoes and other subjects required to magically turn us into into competent Naval Officers.

Naval history, mainly about Lord Nelson, was pretty much a waste of taxpayers' money and our time. Some of the older cadets – professional men, university graduates, business men in peacetime – had heated arguments with the lecturer, particularly over being kind to the defeated enemy as Lord Nelson claimed to have been. (cadets who had fought in the Coral Sea battle said they had been ordered to machine gun Japanese survivors in the water and, therefore found the 'Nelson' type of history rather obsolete.)

It was common for cadets to arise early and put in an hour or more of study before "Wakey, Wakey". An exam of one kind or another was held every two weeks. The highlight of the course was a two week cruise around Port Phillip Bay in HMAS Bingara, a converted sugar carrier.

In those two weeks we practised seamanship, gunnery, signals and emergency drills such as damage control of fire, collision, enemy fire and abandon ship – this last with a lookout armed against shark attack!

As recreation, we were allowed to sail a whaler around Corio Bay, a beautiful place with the attractive town of Geelong on its shores. We were not allowed ashore but spent a great weekend sailing around the bay, greatly helped by one of our group who was an experienced yachtsman.

There was so much to learn in two short weeks and we really only scratched the surface.



*HMAS Bingara,  
used for training  
officer candidates.*

Back to the O.T.S. and on with the lecture/study rounds. Just to liven us up, one day we were marched to the New Entry School and each given a class of new entries to drill. No doubt this was intended to demonstrate our power of command. Recreation was to be found in the 'wet canteen' – no age limit to this one – and compulsory sport at weekends. I played cricket for the first time in years and hiked several miles to a lonely, smelly beach for swimming.

With the end of the course approaching, final boards were held and we were given the choice of 'General' or 'Special Services'. I chose the latter, still with a 'gung-ho' attitude. We drew up our own lists of passes and failures and were soon proved very wrong. Some good blokes were failed and some poor types passed. A mate of mine with a friend in the office had let me know two days early, *very confidentially*, that I had passed. From my observation, all Roman Catholics passed including some who were not worth feeding – I wonder why!

When the results were read out by Commander Harris, the names of those who had failed were read out first. These men immediately packed their gear and returned to New Entry School for drafting. This was March 5<sup>th</sup> 1943 and the change in our status was dramatic. Those under 19½ years were now Midshipmen and those over 19½ were Sub-Lieutenant Naval Officers, soon to receive commissions signed by the Governor General – Henry, Duke of Gloucester. We were given a sum of money and sent up to Myers in Melbourne to be measured for one blue suit and a greatcoat with suitable brass buttons. The rest of our gear we purchased from the clothing store at Flinders. That included such fancy stuff as tan gloves and half-Wellington boots!

Once in our new gear people started to salute us, which was something of a culture shock at first. We spent our nights in one of the dormitories at the O.T.S. and were allowed to visit the Gunroom or Wardroom frequented by the permanent service at Flinders.

### Special Service, HMAS Assault.

There were thirteen starters for Special Service awaiting disposal to HMAS Assault at Nelson Bay, Port Stephens NSW – not far from Newcastle. The rest went off to various ships and establishments, while we waited at Flinders. A course was devised to keep us occupied, believed by us to be a lead up to our future ‘commando’ type operations. This was conducted on the rifle range and started with rifle fire from 800 yards; running while firing then lying down; firing Bren Guns from 400 yards; throwing hand grenades and jumping into a slit trench, fix bayonets and gas masks, then charge the targets over the remaining distance – a really sweaty pastime! We also spent some time firing .45 revolvers, a hard weapon to use.

Finally we were sent off for a few days leave and ordered to report at Newcastle for transport to Assault. Since I had been in the navy for six months at the time I was commissioned, I got to keep my original kit, so I took it home. My sister Gertrude was happy to get the sailor suits to convert into skirts etc., as clothing was severely rationed and of poor quality.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> of 1943, our group of thirteen subs and midships arrived at Newcastle to await transportation. Once again, the seemingly inevitable delay before a three ton truck with loose bench seats arrived, three hours later.

By this time we had done a pub-crawl and were feeling the effects, however the thirty mile trip, including a ferry crossing at Stockton, cleared our heads and we were able to appreciate the beauty of Port Stephens and the lovely situation of Assault on Fly Point. We were also impressed with the amount of military activity in the area and the very obvious presence of many Americans, both navy and army.

The depot itself was new, having been completed in 1942. It was a temporary home to about 600 sailors and about 80 officers from all branches of the service. Our quarters consisted of two main cabins in blocks of sixteen, each block named after a famous Royal Navy admiral. I shared with Berry Spooner, thereby continuing a friendship that had begun when we slung our hammocks side-by-side on our first night at Flinders.

Next morning we met our C.O. – Commander F.N. Cook D.S.C., RAN – who lectured us at some length about naval traditions of loyalty to the C.O. and such things as conduct at mess dinners. His reference to the permanent service as the "active" service<sup>8</sup> did not endear him to us. He was quite proud of his D.S.C. which [sic] he had gained after a combined ops raid on a port in France. With his experience, we expected to find him a dynamic leader but in reality we had a social butterfly who was enjoying an idyllic existence. He was not at all impressed by Mid. John Grainger falling asleep during his oration. Poor John had been lumbered with a boat patrol on our first night and could be excused.

Our first training exercise was in the handling of small landing craft known as L.C.V.P.'s (Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel). These were American, of plywood construction with steel loading ramp and powered by a 225 HP Gray marine diesel motor, designed to carry one Jeep and trailer or 36 troops and crewed by coxswain, stoker and bow and stern hands.



*Landing Craft training,  
HMAS Assault 1943*

We also had a number of armoured barges of English design – twin engine Thornycroft, directed by telegraph repeater and totally unsuitable for use in the South-West Pacific. Another workhorse was the L.C.M. (Landing Craft Mechanical) with twin 225's, all steel construction to carry one tank or 130 troops. These did great work in later operations, carrying all types of vehicles such as trucks, bulldozers etc

Our instructors were from a nearby U.S. naval base and were, of course, men older than us. Some carried knives and were a pretty rough bunch. It didn't take long to pick up the basics of boat handling but it was obvious that our blue uniforms and white caps were unsuitable for the job. A supply of khaki battledress uniforms were obtained for which we paid £2 (\$4), and second hand at that! That was nearly a week's pay for a midshipman on 7/6d a day. These were for winter use – in summer we wore shorts and shirts.

The other big thing at Assault was unarmed combat and silent killing. Many hours were spent on the sports ground trying to disarm an opponent or disable him by various acts of savagery. A lot of time was spent on a commando course climbing trees, jumping from heights, sometimes with full packs, or walking a tight-wire at least twenty feet above the ground (fortunately with overhead wire).



*Combined Ops training, HMAS Assault 1942.*

*(AWM photo)*

We learned something about radio communications, demolition with gelignite, gun cotton etc., booby traps with Murray Switches, small arms fire with a variety of weapons – Thomson sub-machine gun, Owen, Bren, Vickers and even an old WW1 Lewis Gun.

A few fellows had hand guns, mostly souvenirs from the Great War brought back by some relative. One such was a beautiful long-barrelled Luger that used 9mm ammunition, the same calibre as the Owen Gun, so we were able to keep its owner well supplied with ammo.

*Combined Ops training, HMAS Assault 1942*

We took part in several training landings with army units, both in daylight and at night. The landings took place at Shoal Bay, a very good beach for such purposes.

There were also experiments carried out with water-proofing vehicle ignition systems and raising exhausts above water level.

Our gang of junior officers were issued with .303s and a handful of blanks one night and marched off to Shoal Bay where we lay in the sand and fired blanks at the 'enemy'. Was that training or just something to keep us occupied?



By the middle of the year it was becoming clear that whatever plans there had been for an Australian assault force had come to nothing. The ‘yanks’ were moving out of the area, Commander Cook had gone, replaced by the second in command Lt. Commander Lewis – a bomb happy type serving out his time in a safe place. Some of the officers with a bit of pull had transferred from ‘Special’ to ‘General’ service and moved on. The rest of us were carrying out our rostered daily duties and trying, sometimes unsuccessfully, to stay out of trouble. "Assault" ratings often found accommodation in Garden Island (*Sydney harbour*) cells for various offences, which mostly came down to boredom.

### The Catalina incident

It was a cool day in May of 1943. Bill Featherstone and I, two eighteen year old midshipmen, were duty ‘trots’<sup>9</sup> officers on the wharf at Nelson Bay. Two Catalina flying boats from Rathmines on a training flight were cruising about on the opposite side of the bay. Nothing unusual in that – many planes from Williamtown RAAF Base used the bay for exercises.

I was in a landing barge when one of the crew called out that a plane had crashed near Winda Woppa. We immediately headed in that direction flat out at ten knots. Bill was also on the way in another barge. These barges were designed for beach landings and were not equipped for rescue work. Two of my crew told me they couldn’t swim – the other was a reliable cox’n so, in case of necessity, I stripped off. An airman was sighted trying to swim ashore but, with no life jacket and fully dressed, he was not doing too well. I dived in and helped him to climb aboard the barge, which was not easy to do owing to the boat’s design.

By this time, some fishermen had rowed from the shore and helped load two bodies and one injured airman into Bill’s barge and he headed back to the wharf in Nelson Bay. The plane was partly submerged. We went alongside and banged on the hull but could not detect any sound from within, so we hurried back to the wharf. Things there were in a bit of a mess. The depot’s ambulance was not available, so the two survivors were taken to “Assault” by car. Bill still had the pilot’s body on his barge and a fitter who had gone along for the ride. I jumped down from the wharf to help just as the barge rocked and I fell across the pilot’s body. It was soft and spongy with no muscular support at all. That feeling still troubles me. Here it is sixty five years later and, if I close my eyes, I can still see him and describe exactly how he was dressed. Perhaps at eighteen we weren’t such tough guys after all.

On the way back to the wharf our survivor, an air gunner, had told us there were nine in the plane, so seven had died. He had been “lying in a bunk reading when the bells went for landing...” so he stayed there. This probably saved his life as the bunk absorbed much of the impact. He then slipped into the water hoping to swim ashore. He was AG<sup>10</sup> Ken Stowe, I think.

The other survivor was WAG<sup>11</sup> Johnson. The pilot was Flt. Lt. Brian Higgins DFC<sup>12</sup>, known as ‘Tubby’. He is buried at Sandgate War Cemetery, Plot N° D11. Perhaps the other dead are buried at Sandgate too.<sup>13</sup>

During the next week salvage operations were carried out by RAAF and Navy personnel, which was a very grim business. The area where the crash happened is a sand bar where the sea can be quite rough at times. Maybe the pilot was demonstrating a rough water landing and misjudged the height of the waves.

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Ed. Note: The following is further information regarding this incident found on the internet.

*“HMAS Assault, Port Stephens”*

*“.... The temperate weather meant that the base staff and trainees were, for the most part, in good health, though the arduous nature of the training did see a number of trainees admitted to the hospital with various injuries. The hospital staff also performed emergency surgery on a survivor from a Catalina amphibious aircraft that crashed on 24 May 1943. The Catalina had taken off from RAAF Base Rathmines on Lake Macquarie to examine the suitability of conditions in Port Stephens to conduct training for rough water landing. The aircraft crashed into the sea at Shoal Bay that morning tragically killing seven of its nine crew members. The cause of the crash was never determined.”*

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## Chapter 2: HMAS KANIMBLA

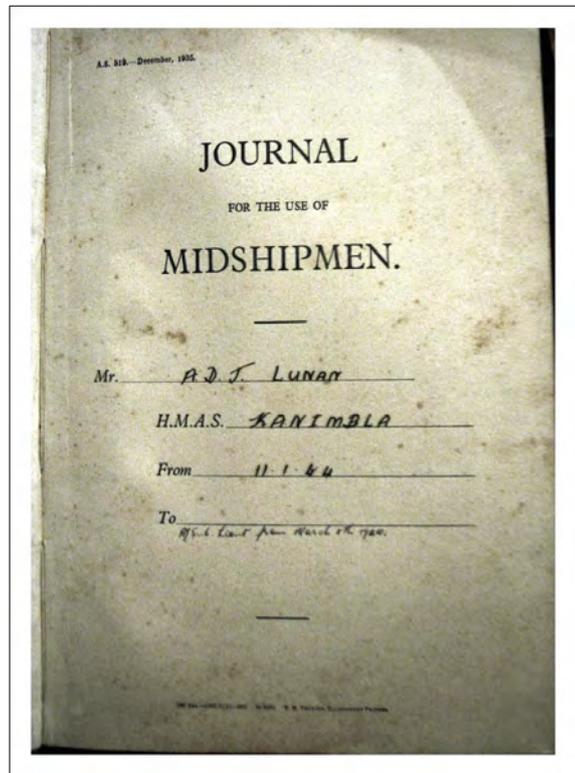


# A Midshipman's Journal

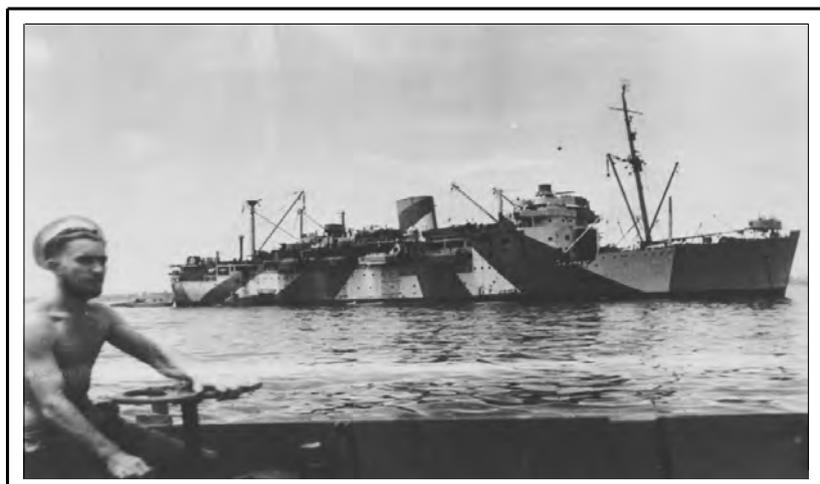
(Ed. Note: Omitted entries are indicated thus: \* ; trimmed portions of entries thus: .....> )



*Kanimbla pre-war*  
(AWM photo)



*H.M.A.S. Kanimbla  
in war paint*  
(AWM photo)



## H.M.A.S Kanimbla

Ed: On January 12<sup>th</sup> 1944 Arthur was posted to H.M.A.S. Kanimbla, a former coastal passenger liner requisitioned for war service and converted to an armed merchant cruiser. By the time of Arthur's joining, Kanimbla had been converted again, this time as an LSI – Landing Ship Infantry.

As a RANR Midshipman, he was required to keep a daily journal for the duration of his time aboard. Arthur has not left a written summary of his time on Kanimbla, relying instead on the entries in this journal, which he retained in his possession after the war. The following are extracts from these entries, concentrating on the more compelling incidents and observations, some being accounts of action under fire.

*Kanimbla's movements during the period covered by the journal entries, 12/01/1944 to 21/10/1944:*

12 <sup>th</sup> Jan 1944	Brisbane		
16 <sup>th</sup> Jan 1944	Brisbane	⇒ Cairns	↻
21 <sup>st</sup> Jan 1944		Milne Bay	↻
<b>23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1944</b>		<b>Langemak Bay</b>	↻ <b>(landings)</b>
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan 1944		Buna Heads	↻
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 1944		Goodenough Island	↻
27 <sup>th</sup> Jan 1944		Port Moresby	↻
31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 1944	Cairns	⇒ Townsville	↻
5 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1944		Langemak Bay	↻
6 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1944		Goodenough Island	↻
7 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1944		Port Moresby	↻
10 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1944	Townsville	⇒ Cairns	↻
<b>14<sup>th</sup> Mar 1944</b>		<b>Megin Harbour</b>	↻ <b>(landings)</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> Mar 1944	Gladstone		↻
26 <sup>th</sup> Mar 1944		Goodenough Island	↻
18 <sup>th</sup> Apr 1944		Cape Cretin	↻
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1944</b>		<b>Tanahmerah Bay</b>	↻ <b>(Hollandia landings)</b>
24 <sup>th</sup> Apr 1944		Milne Bay	↻
24 <sup>th</sup> Apr 1944		Goodenough Island	↻
to		Cape Sudest	↻
4 <sup>th</sup> May 1944		Cape Cretin	↻
5 <sup>th</sup> May 1944		Megin Harbour	↻
<b>7<sup>th</sup> May 1944</b>		<b>Humboldt Bay</b>	↻ <b>(Hollandia landings)</b>
8 <sup>th</sup> May 1944		Milne Bay	↻
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 1944		Humboldt Bay	↻
<b>5<sup>th</sup> June 1944</b>		<b>Toem (Wadke Is.)</b>	↻ <b>(landings)</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> June 1944		Point Djar	↻
7 <sup>th</sup> June 1944		Humboldt Bay	↻
8 <sup>th</sup> June 1944		Sudest	↻
18 <sup>th</sup> July 1944		Stringer Bay	↻
12 <sup>th</sup> Aug 1944		Alexischafen	↻
18 <sup>th</sup> Aug 1944		Madang	↻
31 <sup>st</sup> Aug 1944		Aitape	↻
<b>15<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944</b>		<b>Morotai Island</b>	↻ <b>(landings)</b>
16 <sup>th</sup> Sep 1944		Aitape	↻
<b>20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944</b>		<b>Panaon Island</b>	↻ <b>(Philippines landings)</b>

*Journal entries begin:*

**12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Brisbane)*

Joined HMAS Kanimbla at 2030 at New Farm Wharf, Brisbane. I was shown my quarters by the Officer of the Watch. Owing to the late hour and having travelled in 2<sup>nd</sup> Class seats the previous night, I was glad to turn in.

\*  
\*  
\*

**16<sup>th</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Brisbane – Cairns)*

In preparation for proceeding to sea, I was given my action station, Starboard 3, 20mm, and ‘abandon ship’ station, Raft 13. A large number of troops were embarked, consisting mainly of American Negroes. Lt. Lane and Sub Lt. Dick instructed the junior officers in their duties in the Plot and on the bridges.

At 1115 the tug “Forceful” made fast to our starboard bow as we proceeded astern down the river. The Kanimbla was swung around and ALCAs K8 and K10 were hoisted. A number of LCJs were manoeuvring in the stream but we cleared the river without incident.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Dog I was Plot Midshipman. The work was rather strange to me but proved quite interesting. Our escort was PC 1123. An hour after sailing it was announced that the ship was proceeding to Cairns.

\* *(at sea)*  
\* *(at sea)*

**19<sup>th</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Cairns – at sea)*

At about 0530 HMAS Kanimbla anchored eight miles off Cairns. She was met by two MI’s and new American barges to be exchanged for our own. Operational action stations were sounded and all boats lowered. The exchange was delayed by a number of boats failing to start but eventually it was accomplished and the new boats hoisted. The controls and gear shifts were very stiff owing to their newness. They are well equipped with buckets, brooms, lamps etc., and a supply of life jackets.

About 1600 the anchor weighed and the ship set off bound for Milne Bay and Finschafen. The escort was HMAS Mildura (J207). During exercise action stations, the three inch Oerlikon (?) guns were fired.

\* *(at sea)*

**21<sup>st</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Milne Bay)*

During the morning watch, RDF picked up an echo which may have been a submarine. The escort searched in vain and finally the echo ceased. At dawn, action stations were exercised and, while closed up, a convoy of nine or ten ships was sighted. At about 0900 Samarai Island was passed. This island has one of the largest settlement in this area.

At 1130 the starboard anchor was dropped but, owing to a fault on the part of the Milne Bay pilot, had to be weighed and dropped in a different spot.

The sight of the bay was a great surprise. It was packed with ships of all types including a large number of tankers, some carrying deck cargos of planes. HMAS Shropshire and Stuart were lying beam to beam and USS Phoenix anchored during the afternoon. For the afternoon and first watch I was Duty Midshipman and made a number of trips to the shore and to other ships. The waterfront consists of US and Australian army establishments. The only natives to be seen were in working parties. Coconut palms grew in profusion. A large quantity of rubbish, wooden boxes etc. was floating about, making navigation, especially at night, rather dangerous for a small boat.

\* *(Milne Bay) – Finschafen)*

**23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Langemak Bay landing, Finschafen)*

About 0830 Kanimbla anchored in Langemak Bay, two miles south of Finschafen. Nearby was USS San Pablo and two Liberty Ships<sup>14</sup>. The former is a seaplane tender and repair ship. The boats were lowered and, when filled with troops, stood off until ordered to beach. My boat beached next to three others on soft mud about ten yards from the shore. When the ramp was lowered water rushed in so rapidly that I ordered the ramp to be raised. The Negro troops didn’t seem able to comprehend that they had to keep off the ramp and their officers were no help.



*Langemak Bay 23/1/1944. Landing troops.*

After a few hectic moments I was able to get them clear of the ramp and get it raised. The troops were then disembarked over the side. The next difficulty was to get the boat off the mud.

.....>

The only way to get off was to run the boat ahead, then put it hard astern. Eventually we were clear and set to, to pump and bail the bilges.

.....>

On returning to the ship, the boat was again filled with troops. This time they were disembarked without incident at a jetty.

.....> On the northern side of the bay was an abandoned Japanese camp. Some of the chaps obtained some paper with Japanese characters on it but, on being handled, it crumbled into powder.

During the afternoon Action Stations was sounded but nothing eventuated. It transpired that a small ship was seen on the horizon, apparently being strafed. About 1100 (2100 ?) heavy gunfire broke out and Action Stations was again sounded. Shore batteries threw up a long barrage but we held our fire so as not to disclose our position. However, the San Pablo opened fire, effectively lighting up the bay with her gun flashes. Luckily the raiders' objective was a couple of miles to the south. Shortly after Secure From Air Raid Warning, two red Verey lights were seen and Action Stations were again closed up. This time we weighed anchor and proceeded to sea.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Buna Heads)*

At approximately 1000 we anchored in Buna Heads. Many landing craft, LST's and LCJ's were at anchor in this area. During the day a large number of heavy bombers took off from air strips around Buna. As many as 72 Liberators were counted, flying in groups of eighteen.

Seeing New Guinea is a revelation of growing Allied strength. War material and troops are pouring in, practically unmolested by the enemy. Harbours are packed with shipping, unloading day and night, not bothering to extinguish their powerful arc lights until the [air] raid warning is given, even though Jap air strips are only a matter of minutes [flying time] away.

Anchored near Kanimbla was USS Blue Ridge, a very modern and up-to-date amphibious operations control ship. At 1845 anchor was weighed and we set our course for Goodenough Island.

\*

*(Goodenough Is.)*

\*

*(Port Moresby)*

#### **27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1944**

*(Port Moresby – at sea)*



*Embarking 2/31st Battalion AIF Port Moresby*

At 1045 we commenced to embark troops until eventually 1,090 including 56 officers were embarked. It was quite a change to hear so many Australian voices and see the world famous slouch hats, many stained and battered from long, hard use<sup>14</sup>.

We slipped at 1700. A tug was standing by but its use was not required.

At dusk Action Stations were exercised and a practice shoot was carried out. It is certain that any attacking plane which comes within 2000 feet of Kanimbla will get a hot reception.

\* (at sea)  
\* ( Cairns)  
\* ( Cairns)  
**31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1944** (Townsville)

After a slow trip we arrived at Townsville about 0700.

\* (Townsville)  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1944** (Townsville – at sea)

About 0700 we slipped from Townsville bound for Finschafen. At dusk I went to my new action station, Damage Control Headquarters.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1944** (at sea)

Our embarked troops seem to have settled down to shipboard life. ....>

During the afternoon HMAS Arunta passed to starboard bound in the opposite direction. She made a beautiful picture of streamlined strength, travelling at speed on a bright blue sea with an equally blue sky for background. ....>

**4<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944** (at sea)

Passing through China Straits this morning cable party was closed. This is the most beautiful part of our run, although a very treacherous channel. It is dotted with tropic islands of varying sizes while the mountains on the mainland rise to a great height. Clouds, like snow, drift around their peaks and into valleys. The deep blue of the sea is splashed with a paler hue where coral reefs rise almost to the surface. It is difficult to believe that a country outwardly so luxuriously beautiful could harbour so much terror and disease. It is not hard to understand why New Guinea is still one of the most savage regions of the world. No doubt after the war its rich mineral deposits will be fully exploited, thereby bringing the native population more and more under the white man's influence.

\* (Langemak Bay, Finschafen)  
\* (Goodenough Is.)  
\* (Port Moresby)  
**8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944** (Port Moresby)

Embarkation of troops was carried on from 0700 to 1000. about 2,100 officers and men were embarked consisting of 2/33rd Infantry Battalion, 1/2nd Pioneers<sup>15</sup>, some engineers and a number of officers proceeding to schools for courses in tactics. Owing to lack of accommodation, three of the latter slept in the spare bunks in our cabin. They related some very interesting experiences. One told us that the Jap soldiers seem to be terribly afraid of capture by the Allies. After a day or so of absolute terror, they realise they are not going to be mistreated and become sickeningly servile, bowing and scraping before their captors. Apparently Japanese propaganda is very powerful and effective.

\* (at sea)  
**10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944** (Townsville)

HMAS Warrego resumed her station while we were between Cairns and Townsville. An important incident occurred about 0700 when one of the embarked troops was shot through the head. It is not definite whether it was suicide or an accident. Why a married man, very young, with 24 days' leave in sight should commit suicide I cannot imagine.

Troops were disembarked without incident. To save overcrowding the gangway, a sergeant was posted to stop every fifth man. It was amusing to watch the uneasy look on each man's face when stopped turn to relief as he stepped off the ship. Many of these men have been on active service for four years with very little home leave. At sunset we slipped, bound for Cairns.

\*  
↓ (11<sup>th</sup> Feb - 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944) (Cairns)  
\*

**15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1944** (Cairns)

Stores and supplies for the forthcoming manoeuvre were continued to be loaded. The advance party of troops arrived to prepare things for the main body. This time we are to have part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, whose record in the Middle East, Greece, Crete and New Guinea is well known.

\*

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\*

(16<sup>th</sup> Feb to 4<sup>th</sup> Mar combined operations training in Australia)

**5<sup>th</sup> Mar to 11<sup>th</sup> Mar 1944**

(Gladstone – at sea)

**12<sup>th</sup> Mar to 18<sup>th</sup> Mar 1944**

(at sea – Megan Harbour landings – Gladstone)

Being Sunday, divisions and prayers were held on the quarterdeck. The Landing Ship Detachment presented quite a contrast, being armed with rifles, bayonets fixed. At 2130 the hospital ship “Wanganella” was passed abeam to starboard. She was ablaze with lights, having a band of green neon around her to make clear to all her mission of mercy.

On Monday morning we passed through the beautiful China Straits. Cable Party was closed up as usual for this difficult passage. A noticeable feature was the large number of merchant ships about, most of them bound for Milne Bay. Allied forces are concentrating for the decisive blow which will eventually fall on our enemies.

An interesting article in a newspaper recently said that soon British troops would be arriving in Australia, before Germany is defeated, to take part in the S.W. Pacific fighting.

At Milne Bay, HMAS Townsville parted company and was replaced by PC 476. After clearing Raven Passage we proceeded at full speed until 1500.

On Tuesday morning the embarked troops were landed. Anchor was let go in Megan Harbour and ‘away all boats’ was sounded at 1045. K1 to K12 were lowered loaded and proceeded independently to the beachhead. It was a very poor beach with rocks close to the shore. However, owing to the beach party’s good work, no boats were damaged. After discharging troops, the boats returned with cargo. ....> Anchor was weighed and we cleared Megin Island. At 1705 Manoora took station abeam to starboard distant four cables.

**19<sup>th</sup> Mar to 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 1944**

(Gladstone)

Today we were fortunate enough to attend Church Parade on HMAS Manoora where Rev. Symes, the only Chaplain available to Australian landing ships, is accommodated. Both ship’s companies were present so there was a good attendance. In the afternoon the township of Gladstone provided entertainment in the form of a cricket match, a swimming competition and, at night, a concert. The town lost the cricket match but won the swimming. Most of the artists in the concert were ship’s company.



Swim Meet, Gladstone

Throughout our stay the people of Gladstone have been amazingly hospitable. The town police sergeant showed much sympathetic understanding by seeing that a quantity of beer was available for libertymen but in moderation, preventing the unpleasant incidents that occur when servicemen feel the influence of drink. Appreciation by the ship’s company was shown by their excellent behaviour. If other towns showed some of Gladstone’s spirit, both they and ourselves would enjoy leave much more completely. ....>



Route March Goodenough Is.

\*

**26<sup>th</sup> Mar to 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr**

(Combined operations training Goodenough Is.)

\*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Apr to 9<sup>th</sup> Apr 1944**

(Goodenough Is.)

.....>

Most of Tuesday was taken up with a march. Dust and heat made the going rather uncomfortable but very few did not complete the twelve miles. Lack of exercise found many out resulting in stiff muscles the next day.

.....>

At 0815 Friday we slipped and proceeded to anchorage offshore. Sunday routine was observed – the day being Good Friday.

On Saturday morning troops were loaded and at 0830 anchor was weighed. All ships proceeded to the exercise area and formed into a convoy consisting of HT Allen (*US ship*), Kanimbla, Manoora, Carter Hall (*US ship*), fourteen LCI's and eight LST's. Two destroyers and two sub-chasers were the escort.

\*

⇩ (10<sup>th</sup> Apr to 16<sup>th</sup> Apr combined ops training Goodenough Is. (In preparation for the landings at Tanahmerah Bay)

\*

### **17<sup>th</sup> Apr to 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1944**

### *Cape Cretin ( Tanahmerah Bay landings)*

After topping up the fresh water tanks, we slipped from No 3 wharf and proceeded to anchorage. At 1140 anchor was weighed and we proceeded from Goodenough Island bound for Cape Cretin.

The convoy consisted of Henry T Allen, Carter Hall, Manoora, Kanimbla – USS Swanson carrying Admiral Barbey was guide and escort. Later, USS Grayson joined as also did Gannymede, a Liberty Ship.

At 1600 the Captain outlined the operation to the ship's company. "H" Hour would be 0700 on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> - "D" Day. Three simultaneous attacks would be launched, one at Aitape, one at Humboldt Bay and our attack on Tanahmerah Bay. Our escort would consist of about thirty destroyers and five cruisers. Eight escort carriers would provide air cover, while on "D" Day, the U.S. Fifth Fleet, including four large carriers, would be some two hundred miles to northward.

The Japanese Force in the Hollandia area is presumed to consist of 27,000 troops. Eleven air strips are within 140 miles of the beaches.

Cape Cretin was reached about 0630. There we were joined by seven LST's, one salvage tug and U.S. destroyers Hoppy and Nicholson. Course was then set for Manus Island in the Admiralty Group, north of which would be the rendezvous with the other forces.

Speed of the convoy was nine knots.

A number of lectures on first aid were given and each boat was equipped with a comprehensive first aid kit. Boats' crews received instruction on aircraft recognition and gunnery and spent much of their spare time in bringing their boats to the peak of perfection.

On Wednesday afternoon, escorting vessels astern opened fire on two supposed Jap reconnaissance planes which turned away from the convoy. The action was too far away to be visible except for the shell bursts. At about 0615 on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> we, Red Force, were joined by White and Blue Forces. White Force included H.M.A.S. Westralia and the very large escort included H.M.A.S. Ships Australia, Shropshire, Warramunga, Arunta, U.S. Ships Nashville, Boise, Phoenix and eight escort carriers. There were also another two LSD's.



7/5/1944 Humboldt Bay

This force, 166 ships, is the largest ever gathered together in the South-West Pacific area.

The convoy proceeded at about eight knots throughout Friday without incident.

At about 0530 on Saturday ("D" day) we arrived off Tanahmerah. At almost 0600 a light flashed from the shore. It was answered by a salvo of 8 inch shells. This was the signal for a terrific barrage which [sic] lit up the shore for half an hour.

While this was going on, the boats were hoisted out in record time. The two assault waves loaded quickly and left for Red 1. The remaining six boats loaded jeeps and trailers from no 2 hold and left for red 2. While running in, this wave was fired on from a small island to starboard. USS Kalk effectively dealt with the machine gun nest in very short time.

By the time the wave reached the beach, four LST's had commenced unloading and several beach roads laid.

This section (K) of the beach had a quantity of coral inshore and was later abandoned in favour of a stretch 50 yards away. The ferrying of supplies continued rapidly although sometimes boats had to wait about ten minutes to unload. All Kanimbla boats were hoisted in by 1500.

.....>

We sailed at 1600 and were later joined by Westralia. The convoy then consisted of Henry T Allen, Manoora, Kanimbla and Westralia, escorted by three destroyers and two APD's. Speed was about twelve knots.

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\*

*(23<sup>rd</sup> Apr to 4<sup>th</sup> May at sea – Milne Bay – Goodenough Is. - Cape Sudest - Cape Cretin)*

#### **5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> May 1944**

*(Megin Is. – Humboldt Bay Landings.)*

Loading of troops and stores was carried out throughout Thursday and well into the night. Negro signal units and white US Engineers comprised the troops. Stores amounting to about 380 tons consisted of a large quantity of TNT, sandbags, foodstuffs and vehicles, timber and barbed wire.

Amidst terrific rain, we sailed for a rendezvous off Langemak Bay on Friday morning. There the convoy formed up – HT Allen, Kanimbla, Manoora, Westralia and five escort vessels. ....>



On Sunday morning about 0530 we arrived at Humboldt Bay. The boats were lowered, circled around until signalled to come alongside. On reaching the shore we were met with nothing but confusion. Finally the boats were beached and, as no working parties were provided by the US forces, the boats' crews had to do the unloading. It was very tiring work but no-one complained – a very commendable spirit. After about two hours of this, a few Negro troops were provided as well as a volunteer group from the ship.

Near the beach were the remains of a huge ammunition dump. When evacuating the area, the Japanese had buried a quantity of ammunition under the ground behind the beach. On top of this, the US troops placed a huge dump. Eight well placed bombs on "D"+1 had caused a terrific explosion, so great that it caused the enemy plane to crash.

The destruction was appalling. About forty soldiers were killed, all the trees in the area were levelled. Huge trucks, cranes and bulldozers became masses of twisted, blackened metal. Shell cases, live shells, bombs, rockets, bazooka projectiles and small ammunition were strewn throughout the area, about 300 yards by 50 yards.



*Landing equipment, Tanahmerah Bay*

On one side was a stack of Japanese rice surrounded by hundreds of shattered American petrol drums. Over all hung the sickening smell of decomposing flesh.

Unloading was completed about 1330 and the last boat was hoisted at 1710. A rumour that we were taking wounded and prisoners south came to nothing. However, the Westralia took 25 evacuees and 39 Indian ex-prisoners who had been used by the Japanese as a labour unit. They were suffering badly from malnutrition and lack of medical attention.

\*  
↓ (8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May – amphibious troops training Milne Bay)  
\*

### 15<sup>th</sup> May 1944

.....>  
At last the long awaited stripe. No more “snotty”<sup>16</sup>.

\*  
↓ (15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> May – amphibious troops training Milne Bay)  
\*

↓ (21<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May – preparations for landings at Wadke / Toem)  
\*

### 31<sup>st</sup> May 1944

(Milne Bay)

Working in heavy rain, the boats picked up the last of the cargo (total 700 tons). At 1500 troops commenced to embark and kept coming till 2030. In all 1,846 enlisted men and 100 officers were embarked. As our capacity is 1,200 living quarters had to be improvised. The quarterdeck and “C” deck port and starboard passages were all filled up. Troops’ gear and supplies brought our cargo to 700 tons. This trip will be very uncomfortable. I’ll be glad when it is over.

\*  
↓ (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> June, at sea en-route to Wadke / Toem)  
\*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1944

(Humboldt Bay, at sea en-route to Wadke / Toem)

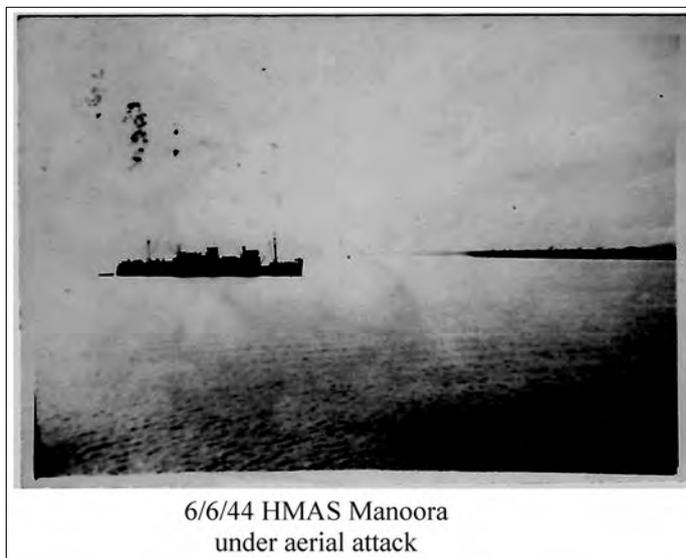
During the forenoon, USS Foreman had a submarine contact. An emergency turn 90° to port was made by the ships, however the alarm proved false.

Information received concerning our movements is rather surprising. Our designation is Sarmi, about 15 miles from Wadke Is. Three thousand US troops in the area are being pounded by a superior Japanese force. It was thought we might load for combat but time too short to allow readjusting all the cargo. These troops are badly equipped for assault, having little ammunition.

.....>

### 5<sup>th</sup> June 1944

(Wadke Is. / Toem landings)



6/6/44 HMAS Manoora  
under aerial attack

At 0530 Wadke was sighted and at 0610 operational action stations was sounded off.

At 0643 the first wave beached, followed at seven minute intervals by the second, third and 4<sup>th</sup> waves. I was leader of the fourth wave. On returning to the ship my boat was filling up. The ship was underway and proceeded a short distance to Toem and anchored. More troops were disembarked some minutes later.

We were about halfway between the mainland and Wadke and a continuous stream of fighters and bombers took off from the mainland.

It seems there are about four hundred planes there.

After I went aboard the position was clarified. The Japs were 600 yards from the beach and the previous night had attacked right on the beach. The Americans, in three weeks, had been forced back from Sarmi, the Jap HQ, to a beachhead of 200 yards (amendment: Area held by US forces five miles long, 350 yards deep at deepest point. The beachhead mentioned was at that time the only strongpoint.)

The rest of their forces were scattered over about one mile, precariously held. The colonel ashore was considering evacuating and did not want green troops. However, it was decided to carry on. By 0810 all troops were ashore and cargo was completed by 1950.

The beach was very bad – shallow and ridged, made more difficult by a short surf. Many boats broached and the newly acquired LCP had a busy time towing off 26 boats throughout the day. Many boats suffered damaged screws and steering gear, while K12 was almost a complete loss. It was swamped on the beach and only strenuous efforts of the beach group saved it.

Lt. Paulsen and Sub. Lt. Le Page were in charge of the beach and worked valiantly. Manoora's boats at the western end of the beach were in just as bad a spot.

Throughout the landings machine guns, mortars and bofors could be heard cracking away in the jungle. However the boat crews were too busy to pay much attention to that. There were a few worried looks when a plane swooped low overhead but all was well – it was an RAAF Beaufort.

During the day a US destroyer shelled the Jap HQ at Sarmi about ten miles west of us. In the afternoon, S/Lt. Bourne and myself went for a stroll through the "safe" area. About 150 yards from the beachhead was the place where the previous night's battle had been staged. Six Japs and five Yanks were killed. The rabbit kings (?) had done their job well and very little was left to see except bloodstains and a large patch of brains. The Nips were buried in a common grave marked "KIA SIX JAPS 6.6.44"

Before attacking the Nips laid a number of mines. These were detected and when examined proved to be Australian. No doubt relics of the Malayan campaign. I obtained the firing mechanism from one and its workmanship is far superior to that of the Japanese. ....>

The method of burying Tojo's defunct warriors is rather grim but necessarily so. Even in death the Nips are dangerous. Many cases have occurred where grenades have been hidden in bodies or armpits so that as soon as the corpse is moved the burial party or souvenir hunter is met by death himself.

To get back to the original subject, a bulldozer scoops a large hole, a wire of about five fathoms is attached to one leg, then the body is dragged into the hole. Everyone except the dozer driver keeps well out of range.

At 1950 discharge of cargo was completed and anchor was weighed at 2036.

About dusk the barrage for the night opened up and shells could be seen bursting in the Toro River area. Mitchell bombers (B-25 's) commenced strafing Sarmi and fiery streams of tracers could be seen tearing into Jap HQ.

After an hour's steaming Wadke was just on the horizon. An air attack was obviously in progress. Flashes and heavy explosions could be seen and heard while AA fire lit up the sky. No doubt some of the boys landed that morning had already given their lives.

## **6<sup>th</sup> June 1944**

*(Pt. Djar)*

At 0600 port anchor was let go two miles from Pt. Djar. A number of passengers were taken aboard bound for Langemak . These included 35 wounded, 12 of them cot cases. They were survivors of an SC [*sub chaser*] sunk at The Beak by a Zero which crashed on it. Blazing petrol did the rest.

.....>

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*(7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> June Humboldt Bay to Sudest)*

## **9<sup>th</sup> June 1944**

*(at sea)*

Anchor was weighed at 0351. During the morning a signal was received from USS Pulganbar to say that she was on Dart Reef position 9°36'10" S Lat, 150°10'15" E Long. We proceeded to her assistance and found her hard on the reef, wind and sea astern. By this time the wind was S.E. Force 7.



*USS Pulganbar aground*

At 1300 the LCP (K1) was lowered with S/Lt. Dick in charge. Kanimbla approached the port quarter as near as possible and an 8" manilla<sup>15</sup> was passed. Pulganbar could not make this fast. A heaving line was passed from K1 but this parted. Another approach was made and a 3½" wire passed. This was made fast and the strain taken. Both engines going astern, the wire tautened. A chain check stopper carried away then the wire parted.

Attempts had to be abandoned and our previous course was resumed. Even at full speed we were unable to make Raven Passage by nightfall so circled until daybreak. Weather conditions were very bad.

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*(10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> June, maintenance & repairs Stringer Bay)*

### **18<sup>th</sup> June 1944**

*(Stringer Bay)*

After divisions this morning, the Captain made a short farewell speech to the ship's company. He was deeply moved at having to leave when things were becoming so well organised. Those responsible for his departure do not realise what a damaging blow they have struck at the 7<sup>th</sup> US Transport Group.

At 2300 Commander N.H. Shaw went overside, farewelled by all the ship's officers and with the ship's company's best wishes.

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\*

*(19<sup>th</sup> June to 17<sup>th</sup> July combined ops training exercises Stringer Bay)*

### **18<sup>th</sup> July 1944**

*(Stringer Bay)*



At 0230 ship was found to be dragging in 40 knot onshore wind. Starboard anchor was let go and manoeuvring was commenced on main engines. APD USS Ward dragged across our bow so engines were put astern, port anchor hoisted so ship could be swung seaward on starboard anchor. At 0300 starboard anchor was weighed and port anchor let go. Although every effort was made to steam out astern the wind took charge and swept ship aground at 0352.

At 0645 HMAS Whyalla arrived and an 8" manilla<sup>17</sup> was passed to her from our port quarters. At 0706 port anchor cleared. Manilla parted 0730.

A small US Army tug arrived but left without passing a line. Whyalla anchored off port quarter and a 5" wire was passed to her. This parted 25 minutes later, so a 3½" wire was passed from Whyalla and two 8" manillas were passed ashore from forward.

At 1020 one headline parted and at 1130 3½" wire parted. Completed disembarking troops. A third headline was passed ashore. Both headlines parted at 1130 so a 3½" wire doubled was passed ashore. At 1210 a 5½" salvage wire and one shackle of anchor chain was passed to Whyalla.

This parted at 1345 so towing was abandoned pending further assistance and more towing wires. HMAS Bundaberg arrived at 1605 and two 4½" LST kedge wires (140/truss) were borrowed. Both MS's commenced towing at 1744 but could not move Kanimbla, so attempts were abandoned till daybreak.

### **19<sup>th</sup> July 1944**

*(Stringer Bay)*

Wind had dropped considerably but sea still rough. Ship settled firmly in sand. Both vessels commenced towing 0800. Bundaberg's towing pendant carried away. Both vessels towing again at 0830. Boats lowered from port side and No4 hatch. Trying to roll ship. Tug "James Wallace" commenced with 10" manilla and ST 458 towing from aft with 8" manilla. 1030 – two 10" manilla kedge lines passed, one for'ard, one aft and two four ton kedge anchors dropped.

All vessels commenced towing but ST 458 had to slip owing to lack of fuel. Bundaberg's towing pendant posted but another was soon passed. During the afternoon all cargo was discharged into LCT's.

### **20<sup>th</sup> July 1944**

*(Stringer Bay)*

At 0030 ship commenced to move sideways and at 0325 she was finally afloat. In coming off the beach we struck Whyalla's stern. All vessels slipped by 0400. In doing so "James Wallace" fouled Whyalla's starboard screw. At 0436 port anchor let go in 23 fathoms.

During afternoon Caledonian Salvos 1750 tow salvage tug arrived and a diver was sent down. After a thorough examination he reported no damage sustained to hull.

\*

↓

\*

*(21<sup>st</sup> July to 11<sup>th</sup> Aug, comb. ops training exercises resumed Stringer Bay)*

### **12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 1944**

*(Stringer Bay, - Alexisshafen)*

Weighed anchor 1630 bound for Alexisshafen and arrived 0730 Sunday. Padre from Manoora held first church service aboard for some months. This is to be a fortnight's rest period and it appears to be in the most beautiful spot in N.G. To set it off, we are amongst Aussie troops again. 4<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Battalions and subsidiary units are camped in the area. The rubber boat salvaged at Milne Bay was inflated and many a happy swimming party disported themselves around the small islands. ....>

During this time the ship was open house to Australian troops. As many as 320 came aboard each night for supper and pictures. Many a happy party was had in the wardroom with AIF officers. Capt. Walpert 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion organised a tour of Jap army camps and native villages for us. Although dusty it proved very interesting. Some troops lived aboard for several days. At night a fleet of small boats would be secured astern – amphibious trucks, rubber boats, native canoes, anything that would float.

### **18<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Aug 1944**

*(Madang)*

Proceeded to Tab anchorage about 20 minutes run time from Madang. A few days after arriving at Madang, a party of Australian nurses from 113<sup>th</sup> AGH (40) were guests of the wardroom. A wonderful time was had by all – much drinking, singing etc. Memories of a pretty little blonde named Betty. The hospital was a favourite spot after that.

A few nights later a dance was held on the AX for ship's company only. The boys did a splendid job of decorating, our own band played and everyone had a very happy time. I reckon an Aussie girl will suit me after meeting such a fine bunch as the nurses at 113<sup>th</sup> AGH Madang<sup>18</sup>.

The next entertainment was provided by the Tasmaniacs, an Army entertainment group of a very high standard. They spent a weekend aboard and gave a number of concerts – musical, comedy, magic and a lightning artist. One outstanding musician was Laurie Smith who played the harmonica as well as Larry Adler if not better. It was with many happy memories and much regret that we left Madang bound for Aitape.

## **31<sup>st</sup> Aug to 9<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944**

*(Aitape: Preparations for Morotai landings)*

### **10<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944**

*(at sea en-route for Morotai landings)*

0730 took station in convoy, 3 cables astern of USS Wasatch, 5 degrees on her post quarter. Convoy consisted of USS Wasatch, HMAS Kanimbla, 5 APD's, 4 LST's, 2 SC's, 15 LCI's. Escorts USS Russell, McKee, Martin, Morris, Anderson, Steward. Proceeded 0820, course 314°, 8 knots. 1200, position 2°, 42½' S Lat., 142°,03' E Long.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944**

*(at sea en-route for Morotai landings)*

.....> ..... at 1200 Red Beach force joined convoy .....> Red Force included Manoora, Carter Hall, LCT's, APD's, LST's, towing LCT's and miscellaneous craft. Now about 98 ships in convoy.

### **13<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944 (D-2)**

*(at sea en-route for Morotai landings)*

At dawn this morning we picked up remainder of convoy consisting of five Cruisers, eight Aircraft Carriers and twenty Destroyers. Formed cruising disposition G2 and proceeded in direction of Morotai Island.

### **14<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944 (D-1)**

*(at sea en-route for Morotai landings)*

At 1400 action stations sounded off. Ten unidentified aircraft were reported to be heading toward us, however they were identified as friendly.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944 (D Day)**

*(Morotai Island landings)*

At 0612 Warrumunga opened fire on two Jap barges which were sunk. Cruisers and Destroyers carried out bombardment of beaches and surrounding islands. It was very spectacular but there proved to be no Japs within range except the barges previously mentioned.

I had charge of the third wave onto White Beach. First wave left ship at 0827, followed at five minute intervals by the second and third waves on a seven mile run in.

Luckily no opposition was encountered as the troops had to wade about 30 yards waist deep to the beach. Many vehicles were stuck amongst the coral and had to be hauled out with bulldozers.

Most of our cargo was unloaded onto LCT's and by 1440 everything was out and the boats hoisted with the exception of three LCMs which were taken over by the ESB crews.

At 1600 we got underway with Manoora in company, escorted by USS Stevens and PC467, bound for Humboldt Bay. The only casualty was a soldier slightly injured by a fallen tree.

## **15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> Sep 1944**

*(repairs and resupply Aitape)*

## **29<sup>th</sup> Sep to 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944**

*(Humboldt Bay: preps for Philippines landings)*

Now commenced a period of hard work storing, watering, oiling in preparation for the coming Philippines landings due to take place on 20.10.44.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> we loaded with troops, 162 officers and 1200 enlisted men of the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment US Army 24<sup>th</sup> Division, the same Div we took to Tanahmerah. For Yanks, they are a good clean bunch, and 42 officers are more comfortable to live with than the 147 we took to Morotai.

.....>

### **13<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944**

*(at sea en-route for Philippines landings)*

Today we weighed anchor at 1505 and proceeded towards the Central Philippines – Leyte Island and Panaon Island being our eventual destinations. Our convoy consists of 118 ships of all types. Altogether there are 600 ships taking part including 83 carriers and the US Pacific Fleet.

On "A Day" (20.10.44) 80,000 troops will be landed and by A+15, 250,000 will be in the Philippines. Stand by, Hirohito!

### **14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944**

*(at sea en-route for Philippines landings)*

Proceeded at 9 knots on the first leg of our course 320° – this remains the same for 745 miles.

On Sunday a convoy from Manus Island (Admiralties) joined us, making a total of 148 ships.

### **16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944**

*(at sea en-route for Philippines landings)*

We are expecting opposition either by air or land, so everyone has been busy checking guns, ammunition, fire fighting equipment etc. Many church services have been held for varying denominations. ....>



*Wardroom mural  
painted by Dennis Dugan*

Aboard we have Frank Morton, official war artist, Dennis Dugan from the “Melbourne Age” and “Sydney Morning Herald” and a news and newsreel photographer so one way or another we should get some good publicity out of all this.

HMS Ariadne, a fast mine laying cruiser, had gone ahead to land US Rangers on Dinigat and Homonhon Islands on "D-3". She was to pick us up again on "D-1". HMAS Gascoyne had gone on to buoy the channel.

First radar land echo was at 2240, distant 18 miles.



Panaon Island, Central Philippines. PC in foreground.  
20/10/1944 ("A" Day" , Beach Green 1 )

**20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944** "A Day"

*(Philippines landings)*

We entered the Central Philippine Straits in darkness guided by lights rigged by the US Rangers. Everything went very smoothly until 0710 when a Tory streaked out of the clouds and let go a bomb which [sic] fell harmlessly astern of the Panaon Attack Group. All boats were lowered at 0825.

I accompanied Lt. Hatcher in K1, leading the first wave onto Green 2 (Leyte Island).



20/10/44 Leyte Island, Central Pilippines.  
(Beach "Green 2"). Malopola Village to left.  
Two air raids that day. A quiet exit after unloading.

"H Hour" was advanced to 0930 instead of 1000. The first wave left the ship in two columns of four, with the LCS leading for most of the run in, its rocket tubes loaded. Everyone waited quietly for any sounds of opposition.

When near the beach a large crowd of Filipinos raced down to meet us. Some waved our boats in to the best beaching places. As the first soldiers stepped onto the beach, the natives clapped and cheered, shaking them by the hand like long-lost cousins. There was no doubt about the genuineness of their welcome. It made all the arduous, monotonous work of past months worthwhile. I felt for the first time that special feeling reserved for liberators of the oppressed.



Things went much the same way on Green (Panaon Island) to which beach most of the troops and all the equipment went.

I landed there about 1030 and had a look around. The natives are not the modern city type of Filipino but are quite civilised in many ways. They were very embarrassed at having to greet us in torn and threadbare clothes, some even made of old bags. The Japs had taken their reserves of clothing along with all their rice, burning many of their huts into the bargain.

.....>

Guerrilla troops had done good work during the eight months of Japanese occupation up till about last July. US subs provided arms and ammunition and eighteen Filipinos killed 65 Japs. They had also sunk a Japanese barge by some means.

All day long a constant crowd of beautifully made canoes clustered around the ships, the natives begging or bartering for clothing, soap, powder etc. Quite a few fowls found their way on board in exchange for shirts, blankets or anything else. Bananas and straw hats were also popular items. One lad was brought on board and completely rigged out in a blue uniform, even down to a first class stoker's badge.

.....>

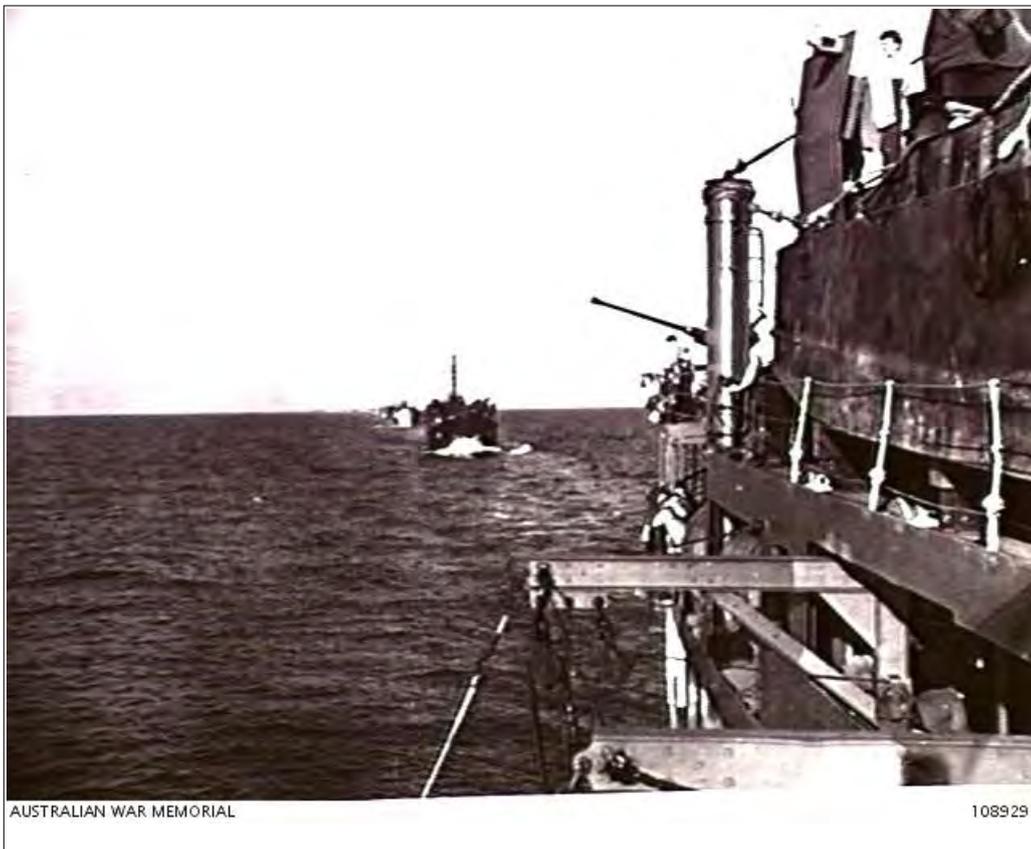
During this time the unloading had been proceeding very well. The Yanks, having learnt from the Humboldt Bay disaster, shifted their ammunition off the beach very quickly.

.....>

We were underway by 1800. At 1815 action stations were sounded off when a destroyer opened fire on a Mick (twin engined torpedo bomber). Twice it attempted to dive on the convoy but was driven off by intense AA fire. The attack lasted about twenty minutes.

Reports from other landings further north on Leyte show that some opposition was encountered but casualties were light.

By morning we were well on our way back to Humboldt Bay ... eighteen APA's and AKA's escorted by four destroyers.



**21<sup>st</sup> Oct 1944** “A Day +1”

*(Philippines landings)*

It is Saturday and a typical tropical morning – a bright blue sky above and a calm glittering sea below.

Suddenly the lead ship of the second division pulls slightly out of line. Her flag is at half mast, her poop and after gun pits crowded with silent bareheaded sailors. Near the rail is a flag-draped object. Although we are too far away to hear, we can see the band and know it is playing the hymns for burial at sea.

Suddenly the flag flutters and a bare board gleams in the sunlight as two white bundles splash into the still blue sea and sink to their last lonely rest.

Silence for a moment, then three volleys crash out, the last tribute of fighting men to fallen comrades. Two more of America’s sons have paid the supreme sacrifice for a cause they believe just.

Somewhere, thousands of miles away, there will be two red-starred telegrams: “The Secretary of War desires to express his deep regret ...” Stereotyped you say! Yes, but they will still break the hearts of two mothers, wives or sweethearts. Why should their men be taken?

Will we, too, someday see our sons marching off to war? Must the flower of a nation’s manhood be ever raised in the fear that it may suddenly be crushed before the juggernaut of war? Let us hope that men will awaken to the foolishness and tragic waste of war – that it will be no more.

*end of journal entries*

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*For background information on this period (Operation Reckless) of the Pacific War:*

<https://pwencycl.kgbudge.com/H/o/Hollandia.htm>

## **Chapter 3: After Kanimbla**

### **Beach Commando**

*“Neither one nor the other, but the best of both”*

Arthur left no written record of his remaining time in the navy after the last entry in his journal on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1944, apart from some information contained in correspondence between himself and the Dept. of Defence in 1993 and 1994. The following is the record of his postings provided by the Dept. for that period:

2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1944	posted to HMAS Kuranda (QLD),	<b>“Beach Party additional”</b> .	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1944	to 8 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	HMAS Manoora	<i>(ship)</i>
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	to 16 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	HMAS Penguin (NSW)	<i>(depot)</i>
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	to 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	HMAS Moreton (QLD)	<i>(depot)</i>
18 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	to 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	HMAS Kuranda (QLD)	<i>(depot)</i>
20 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 1944	to 21 <sup>st</sup> Nov. 1944	HMAS Magnetic (QLD)	<i>(depot)</i>
22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1944	to 29 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1944	HMAS Kuranda (QLD)	<i>(depot)</i>
30 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1944	to 30 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1944	HMAS Moreton (QLD)	<i>(depot)</i>
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 1944	to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Apr. 1945	HMAS Penguin (NSW)	<i>(depot)</i>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Apr. 1945</b>	<b>to 16<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1945</b>	<b>HMAS Madang (Sth West Pacific)</b>	<i>(depot)</i>
<b>17<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1945</b>	<b>to 17<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1945</b>	<b>HMAS Morotai (Sth West Pacific)</b>	<i>(depot)</i>
<b>18<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1945</b>	<b>to 13<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1946</b>	<b>HMAS Glenelg (Sth West Pacific)</b>	<i>(ship)</i>
14 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1946	to 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1946	HMAS Leuwin (W.A.)	<i>(depot)</i>
21 <sup>st</sup> Jan. 1946	to 23 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 1946	HMAS Torrens (SA)	<i>(depot)</i>
24 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 1946	to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Apr. 1946	HMAS Rushcutter (NSW)	<i>(depot)</i>

(Navy practice seems often to have attached personnel to shore establishments, perhaps for administrative purposes (?), even if they were deployed elsewhere.)

Considering the extremes to which he was exposed, this “record of service” seems almost dismissive of the rigours and dangers he must have faced during these remaining months of the war, both at home and abroad.

However, scrutiny of this correspondence together with research on the Australian War Memorial and National Archives websites reveals the true scope of his service during this period.

Extracts from Arthur’s letters:

*“... I was in command of the first wave of landing craft onto Leyte.” ...*

*“After the landings at Leyte, Central Philippines we returned to Milne Bay (N.G.) where I left the ship (Kanimbla) to take up an appointment with Naval Beach Commandos, 1 Aust. Beach Group at Cairns.*

*From 2/11/44 to 8/11/44 I was aboard HMAS Manoora awaiting passage to Australia.*

*From 9/11/44 to 17/11/44 I was taking passage on U.S.S. Lurline<sup>19</sup> to Brisbane.*

*From 17/11/44 I was at HMAS Moreton, then travelling by train to Cairns where I joined HMAS Kuranda on 23/11/44.*

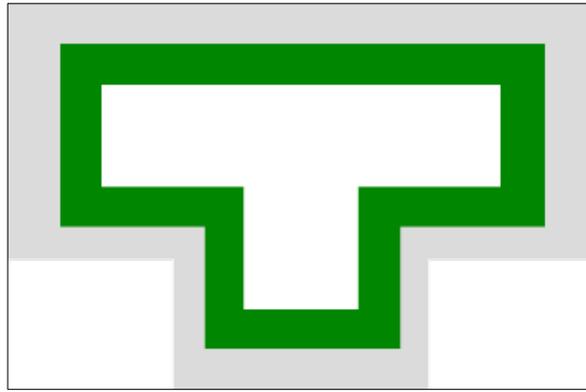
*On 29/11/44 I proceeded to Trinity Beach and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Aust. Beach Group, was issued with full Army gear and lived as an infantry soldier<sup>20</sup>. After further training we finally left Australia via Townsville on the U.S. troopship ‘David C. Shanks’<sup>21</sup>.”*

*“From 23/11/44 to 17/9/45 I was a member of Naval Beach Commandos attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Beach Group.”*

and again: *“We embarked from Townsville and proceeded to Morotai then Borneo, where I landed with the second wave of the 2/17th Battalion on Brunei, British North Borneo.”*

*“I remained with the 1<sup>st</sup> RAN Beach Group until 17/9/1945”*

The 1<sup>st</sup> RAN Beach Group (commandos) was a hybrid unit drawn from all branches of the services, highly trained operatives whose tasks were to go ashore with the first assault waves to establish the beachhead and prepare it for the safe landing of troops, ordnance and stores. They were also highly trained in all aspects of jungle warfare, including hand-to-hand combat.



2/17th Infantry Battalion Unit Patch 1942 – 1946  
(green border on white)



*Brunei, North Borneo, 10 June 1945.  
Members of 2/17 Infantry  
Battalion disembarking from  
their landing craft on Green  
Beach; they are part of the  
second wave landing during the  
Oboe 6 operation.*

*(AWM image)*

Following the June 10<sup>th</sup> '45 landings, it appears that Arthur remained embedded with the 2/17th Battalion during operations to recapture Borneo from the Japanese occupying forces. This battalion's role in the operations saw them land on Brunei at Brooketon and participate in capturing the capital before dispatching companies to secure individual objectives in the outlying areas as the Australians advanced along the coast towards the oilfields at Seria.

While any involvement by Arthur in land based actions following the initial landings cannot be demonstrated, there is ample evidence from official war diaries that the 1<sup>st</sup> Beach Group as a whole continued to act as part of the ground forces: 'Standing Orders' for the ongoing conduct of the campaign were issued to all parties concerned, which included 1<sup>st</sup> Beach Group.

On 13 August 1945, the 2/17th Battalion received the order to cease offensive action. The bulk of the battalion remained deployed until the end of the month. During this time they were involved in ensuring all Japanese forces in the area received the surrender instructions and complied with them.

Allowing that Arthur "... remained with the 1<sup>st</sup> RAN Beach Group until 17/9/1945" before then being posted to the corvette HMAS Glenelg the day after, it seems reasonable to assume that he was in fact actively deployed in Borneo with the 2/17th Battalion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division for the three months between the 10<sup>th</sup> of June to the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1945.

*(For information on this period of the Pacific War search "Operation Oboe 6")*



HMAS GLENELG

*(AWM photo)*

Apart from his Midshipman's Journal, as with most things connected to his wartime service, Arthur left very little information regarding his time aboard HMAS Glenelg with the crucial exception of one telling sentence from his correspondence with the Dept. of Defence:

*"... Appointed to HMAS Glenelg for passage to Amboina as Assistant Port Director"*.

In the course of researching the activities of HMAS Glenelg during this period, these two images below also came to light ...



Sub Lt. A.Lunan  
far right, front row

*(AWM photo)*



*(AWM photo)*

... confirming the link between Arthur's service record and the following photographs from his own album that relate to that ship, the surrender of Japanese forces in Ambon in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and of Australian Prisoners of War :

From the AWM website :

*[“In December 1944 Glenelg returned to Australia ..... to commence a refit, which was completed in February. On 16 March she departed Sydney for Manus to resume operational duty. The remainder of the period to the close of hostilities was taken up chiefly by escort of Morotai and Biak convoys. In April she escorted a convoy to Leyte Gulf in the Philippines and spent some time in the Borneo area” .]*



Japanese waiting to surrender  
Ambon, Dutch East Indies Sept 1945

*[... “In September (‘45) Glenelg took part in the reoccupation of Ambon and remained in the Celebes area during the following months ...” ]*

From Arthur Lunan’s album.

The Glenelg was certainly at Ambon where these photos from Arthur’s album of liberated Prisoners Of War, POW graves and dock scenes were taken ...

*[ AWM: “Glenelg ... brought members of the 33rd Infantry Brigade into the area to take over from the Japanese” ]*



A survivor of the 2/21st Battalion



Japanese working party unloading  
at Ambon Sept. 1944

From Arthur Lunan’s album.

again, from the same website  
*“ ... and was instrumental in the repatriation of some of those Prisoners Of War.” ]*

From Arthur Lunan's album.

A hut in a POW camp



From Arthur Lunan's album.



Graves of POWs at Amboina

From Arthur Lunan's album.



Grave of Lt. T C Derrick V.C., D.C.M.  
2/48th Batt. K.I.A. Tarakan 1945

From Arthur Lunan's album.



Ship's Company HMAS Glenelg  
Amboina September 1945  
*(I am 3<sup>rd</sup> from right, front row)*

From Arthur Lunan's album.

[ “On 1 November she departed Ambon for Fremantle, via Morotai, Townsville, Sydney, Melbourne and finally Glenelg, after which she had been named.” ]

From Arthur’s album:  
He is seated at the far  
left of the main table.



Civic Reception for ship's company HMAS Glenelg  
on the occasion of the ship's first visit to Glenelg Nov 1945

This then completes the story of Arthur’s wartime journey that began with his enlistment in Aug 1942 and concluded with his demobilisation in April 1946 :

*Aug '42 Cadet, HMAS Cerberus (Flinders Naval Base) ⇒ Mar '43 Special Services, HMAS Assault ⇒ Jan '44 Midshipman, HMAS Kanimbla, Langemak Bay landings ⇒ Mar '44 Acting Sub Lt., HMAS Kanimbla, Megin Hbr. landings ⇒ Apr '44 HMAS Kanimbla, Tanahmerah Bay landings ⇒ May '44 HMAS Kanimbla, Humboldt Bay landings ⇒ Jun '44 HMAS Kanimbla, Wadke Is. landings ⇒ Sep '44 Sub Lt., HMAS Kanimbla, Morotai Is. landings ⇒ Oct '44 HMAS Kanimbla, Leyte, Central Philipinnes landings ⇒ Nov '44 HMAS Kuranda (1<sup>st</sup> Beach Group) ⇒ Jun '45 2/17<sup>th</sup> Battalion Brunei, British Nth. Borneo landings ⇒ Sep '45 HMAS Glenelg, Amboina ⇒ Jan. 46 HMAS Torrens ⇒ Feb. '46 HMAS Rushcutter ⇒ April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1946 Demobilisation, Sydney.*



Lest We Forget

Sub Lt. A.D.J. Lunan, RANR,  
Flag Bearer,  
ANZAC Day Parade  
Taree, NSW.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Daniel Cahill served in the Ceylon Police Force for a time and enlisted for the Boer War. Information on his service records for WW1 is available through the National Archives website.
- <sup>2</sup> Until 1962 rail passengers had to change trains at Albury due to NSW and Victoria having different rail gauges in use.
- <sup>3</sup> A “Wet Canteen” is able to serve alcohol; a “Dry Canteen” is not.
- <sup>4</sup> Toc H refers to hostel type accommodations called Talbot House that were established in Europe and later on in Australia during WW1 to provide low cost rest and recreation facilities for service personnel.
- <sup>5</sup> “Tally Ribbon”: the band on a sailor’s cap, usually black with gold lettering identifying his posting i.e. his ship or shore establishment.
- <sup>6</sup> ‘Ming the Merciless’ was a character from the Flash Gordon comic strip and movies of the 1930’s, a ruthless tyrant who ruled the planet Mongo.
- <sup>7</sup> The mariner’s day is divided into six watches, each four hours long, except that the 4:00 to 8:00 pm watch may be “dogged”; that is, divided into the first and second dogwatches, each two hours long, to allow men on duty to have their evening meal.
- <sup>8</sup> “Active Service” personnel referred to permanent members of the R.N. and R.A.N. as opposed to wartime recruitments who were R.A.N.R. i.e. Royal Australian Navy Reserve.
- <sup>9</sup> Trot Moorings are arranged in a line and the boats are tethered fore and aft. Because the boats do not move around it enables many more boats to be moored in the same area.
- <sup>10/11</sup> The survivors were in fact Air Gunner Sgt. John Johnson and Armourer AC1 Kenneth Stowe.
- <sup>12</sup> Flt. Lt. Higgins’ exploits earlier in the war can be viewed via a number of websites by searching ‘ brian higgins dfc RAAF’. A strategic airfield in far north Queensland was later renamed Higgins Field in his honour.
- <sup>13</sup> All of the casualties from the crash were buried in Sandgate Cemetery.
- <sup>14</sup> The Liberty Ships were a so-called "emergency" class of ships developed during World War II. The Liberty class of ships came to represent the role of America’s immense industrial might in the war effort. Nearly 3000 of the ships were built in an extremely short period; the first ship was built in just 70 days.
- <sup>15</sup> It is likely that this relates to either the 2/1 Pioneer or the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion. The prefix “2/ ” was appended to any unit of the Second AIF to distinguish it from those of the First AIF.
- <sup>16</sup> Promotion to Sub Lieutenant, hence “No more snotty” - (RN) Derogatory term for a midshipman. Supposedly due to the "young gentlemen’s" habit of wiping their noses with their sleeves. The Royal Navy attempted to counter this habit by sewing buttons on the cuffs of naval uniform jackets.
- <sup>17</sup> Manilla rope is a type of rope made from manilla hemp (abacá) and much used for ships’ hawsers in sizes of various diameters. The name refers to the capital of the Philippines, one of the main producers of abacá.
- <sup>18</sup> 113<sup>th</sup> AGH (Australian General Hospital) was the overarching institution for all forward area field hospitals during WW2, becoming the Repatriation General Hospital Concord in 1947, at that time the largest in the southern hemisphere. Each field hospital had its own designation. The most likely unit in Madang at this time was the 2/11th.
- <sup>19</sup> See Lurline Menu in section on Ephemera.
- <sup>20</sup> See background under “ RAN Beach Group Commandos” in attachments.
- <sup>21</sup> ‘... In early May 1945, the battalion moved to Townsville where it boarded the transport David C. Shanks, bound for Morotai Island.’ (*Wikipedia citation 2/17 Battalion History Committee 1998, pp. 273–274, 366*)

## Addenda

### Ephemera

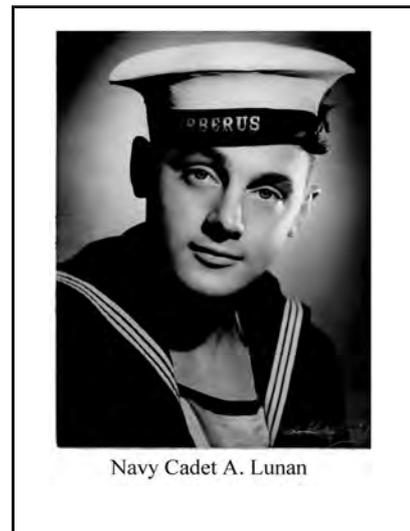
The following pages contain reproductions of some of the photographs from Arthur's personal album and other mementos that relate to his navy story. The captions are transcribed directly from the album.



King's Scout



Navy Cadet A. Lunan



Navy Cadet A. Lunan



HMAS Assault : LCI (Landing Craft Infantry)  
on the beach at Shoal Bay



Assault Comb Ops training 1943  
Training in early types of landing craft



HMAS Assault : Combined Operations training  
Shoal Bay 1943



Over the bows of Westralia looking toward  
the entrance to Port Stephens



En-route to Townsville, Australian troops  
enjoying a game of two-up.



En-route to Townsville, Australian troops  
enjoying a game of two-up.



*Embarking 2/31st Battalion (2)*



*Langemak Bay 23/1/1944. Landing troops.*



7/5/1944 Humboldt Bay



Humboldt Bay preparing for invasion of the Philippines 12/10/1944  
" LCT in foreground, LSD Gunston Holt to right, HMAS Manoora back left."



20/10/1944 ("A" Day Beach Green 1)  
Panaon Island Central Philippines. PC in foreground.



At Beli Beli wharf 30/3/1944



20/10/44 Leyte Island, Central Philippines.  
(Beach "Green 2"). Malopola Village to left.  
Two air raids that day. A quiet exit after unloading.



Petty Officer Salton, S/ Lt Lunan & Sapper Pulford  
Lake Sentani , Dutch New Guinea 1944



Unloading at Toem



USS Nashville in Humboldt Bay 15/10/1944



Ambon Docks Sept. 1944



Japanese barges at Ambon Sept. 1944



This monster was executed at Morotai



Japanese working party unloading  
at Ambon Sept. 1944



HMAS Glenelg Amboina Sept. 1945



## Further information

### Extracts from unit histories regarding HMAS Glenelg's role at Ambon:

"After the surrenders of the senior commanders (*Japanese*) had taken place in the first days of September, the situation at Ambon became favourable for the recovery of prisoners of war."

#### "Ambon Surrender and Aftermath 8-22 Sept. 1945"

"Moluccas (*area headquarters*) arranged for ships to be dispatched to Ambon to convey the Allied prisoners of war thence to Morotai. H.M.A. Ships Glenelg, (*Lieut-Commander Whitebrook senior officer squadron*), Cootamundra, Latrobe and Junee sailed from Morotai at 8 p.m. on 8th September.

The force reached the rendezvous position, five miles off Tanjong Nusanive, the south-western extremity of Ambon, at 11.30 a.m. on the 10th, and radio communication was established with Major Westley, commanding officer of Gull Force. At 11.55 a.m. Lieutenant Nishida of the 21st Naval Guard Unit boarded Glenelg from a barge wearing the Japanese ensign and a white flag, and the force entered harbour and berthed alongside the main jetty where all the prisoners of war were waiting. Embarkation proceeded immediately contact had been made with Major Westley and Japanese officials.

Latrobe, after embarking 20 walking cases, was detached to Piru Bay, Ceram, to embark two officers and 23 other ranks of the Indian Army who had been reported by Major Westley. The other three ships left Ambon at 5.45 p.m. on the 10th. "*While passing Tanjong Nusanive,*" Whitebrook noted in his report to N.O.I.C. Moluccas, "*the 'Still' was sounded and colours half-masted as a tribute to those of Gull Force who had died in captivity.*"

The force arrived at Morotai in the morning of 12th September. A total of 164 prisoners of war was brought out in the ships from Ambon. They comprised 123 Australians, nine Americans, seven Dutch, and 25 Indians from Ceram.

N.O.I.C. Moluccas, in his report to the Naval Board, remarked: "*Of the total of 164, 70 officers and men, including 38 stretcher cases, needed medical attention. The remainder were fit for normal travel, all were extremely emaciated, some men of twelve stone normal weight weighing only five stone.*" "

The 123 Australians were all that remained of the original Gull Force of 800, the remainder having either been beheaded or died from malnutrition and disease. One A.I.F. other rank died the day following arrival at Morotai.

The Japanese commander at Ambon was prepared to surrender to Whitebrook, but this was not accepted, since it was impossible to land an occupation party of a reasonable size. Occupation was carried out on 2nd September. The naval force consisted of Glenelg (S.O.), Cootamundra, Rockhampton, Junee and Latrobe, and Birchgrove Park (640 tons), Anaconda (238), Krait, Three Cheers, Nyanie, Westralia and Poyang. The occupation force comprised the 33<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Brigade of 2,705 officers and men, with Brigadier R Steele in command."

#### 1-27 Sep 1945 MOTHERING THE SICK

"Glenelg, with an advanced party of 110 A.M.F., arrived at Ambon at 8 a.m. on 22nd September, and occupation proceeded without difficulty. Whitebrook assumed duties as Port Director. The remaining ships, carrying A.M.F. troops and stores, arrived in follow-up convoys which reached Ambon on 23rd and 27th September.

The formalities on the first day were smoothly performed. The Ambonese welcomed Glenelg, the Australian and Dutch flags were hoisted at the control tower of the wharf, and at 10 a.m. Vice-Admiral Ichise, commanding the naval base, and Major-General Kobori, commanding the 5th Division, reported and were given instructions.

Next day the convoy arrived and the troops disembarked. That afternoon General Blamey's proclamation was read in the presence of an assembly of Ambonese, and a bamboo-flute band performed. The follow-up force arrived on 27th September.

In between her two Ambon operations Glenelg, as Senior Officer, with Rockhampton, Bowen, Junee and Latrobe, arrived at Menado on 14<sup>th</sup> September with an A.M.F. and N.I.C.A. Contact Team, and transported 334 internees — of whom 110 were women and 145 children — thence to Morotai. The operation was completed on 16th September. All those brought out from Menado were suffering badly from malnutrition. N.O.I.C. Moluccas, in his report, remarked:

*"The crews of H.M.A. Ships performed most admirably, and turned over their mess decks completely to the women and children. Very few of the crew had any sleep whatsoever. In addition, they mothered the women and children who were very seasick."*

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