

17 - THE HOLLYWOOD FLEET

All vessels of the Hollywood Fleet, provided service in aid of the war effort. Both *Lolita* and *Leilani* reached the north coast of New Guinea with *Leilani* reaching Morotai in north-east Indonesia. One served on the south-west coast of New Guinea, and at least one served in Darwin during the Japanese bombing raids before she was later joined by two others which conducted various patrol duties along the Arnhem Land Coast. The remainder continued to protect the ports of Sydney, Newcastle and Port Kembla.

It is a significant loss, that the commander's Reports of Proceedings²⁷⁷ and the ships logs for each vessel have not survived. If they had, we would know more of their wartime actions including the service of the commanders and crews, and their stories could be properly told.

The following information for each of the vessels of the Hollywood Fleet, has been compiled from the very few records and newspaper accounts that have survived. Unfortunately, the records held by the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and National Australian Archives (NAA) are very incomplete and much of the naval history of the Fleet appears to have been lost forever – unless there are undisclosed records still to be released.

By laboriously working through the National Library online newspaper collection, war time logs for the ports of Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin and Madang, reports from other HMAS ships, and the few Records of Proceedings that are held in the AWM, the following information for each vessel has been pieced together.

Dates for requisition and commissioning have been gathered from the Sydney Log,²⁷⁸ the Navy Lists²⁷⁹ and from the files that are available for each vessel.

Despite my searches, I am sure there is further information to be discovered and added to their stories.

For six of the vessels; *Kiara*, *Leilani*, *Miramar*, *Toomeree*, *Winbah* and *Yarroma*, their histories simply peter out. What happened to these vessels? Have any survived? Perhaps someone knows something of them! It would be terrific to complete their stories.

In addition, whilst the Navy Lists provide the names for the commanders of each vessel throughout their navy service, there is no such list to identify the sailors who served on each throughout the war.

However, it may one day be possible to prepare crew lists.

Each sailor was required to be paid a salary, and those payments were made through the shore station to which each vessel was always assigned. The payments were always recorded in the shore station's 'Ships Ledgers', together with the names of each sailor and their vessel. It is conceivable that by trawling through the Ledgers, accurate crew lists could be compiled. But, there are hundreds of these

²⁷⁷ Commanders of all commissioned naval ships and establishments are required to submit, at least every quarter or more often, Reports of Proceedings for the previous period. The reports are addressed to the Naval Board and proceed to the Board via the chain of command so as to ensure all necessary commanders are informed of the activities of each ship. Other than a single file for a limited period towards the end of 1944 and 1945, none of the earlier reports (if they were submitted) for each of the vessels of the Hollywood fleet have been identified as being held, either within the National Archives or with the Australian War Memorial. Further enquiries have been initiated with the Navy in the hope the reports may still exist and have not yet been passed to Archives for safe keeping and made accessible to the public. The loss of these Reports, if they were submitted, not only for the vessels of the Hollywood Fleet, but for all other vessels and establishments would be a significant loss regarding our proper understanding of the role and activities of the ships and men who served.

²⁷⁸ NAA: AWM78, 418/1: Sydney Log

²⁷⁹ <http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/navy-list>

voluminous accounting ledgers, many which have never been examined and are yet to be released by the National Archives for public access.

Whilst I contemplate the enormity of that task, I will continue my search for the missing Reports of Proceedings, War Diaries and Logs for each vessel, and will continue to collect additional stories and information regarding the vessels. Please contact me if you have any further information so it can be added to these histories. Your assistance will be welcomed.

Commissioned ships of the Royal Australian Navy or vessels of the Naval Auxiliary Patrol

It appears to some authors, interested observers and members of the Naval community, that *Lolita* and her fellow vessels of the 'Hollywood Fleet', were vessels of the Naval Auxiliary Patrol (**NAP**) and were often referred to as '*just one of the Napies*'.²⁸⁰ This is incorrect, as each of the thirteen vessels of the Hollywood Fleet were owned by the Commonwealth of Australia and commissioned as His Majesty's Australian Ships of the Royal Australian Navy as Channel Patrol Boats (CPBs). Unlike the Hollywood Fleet vessels (and other requisitioned and purchased vessels), NAP vessels were owned by private individuals or companies.

During 1944 as the threat of war activities in Australian waters were significantly reducing, the Hollywood Fleet vessels were crewed partially or entirely by NAP personnel, despite the vessels remaining in Commonwealth ownership as commissioned vessels of the RAN. Some of the Hollywood Fleet vessels were transferred to the NAP.

By 1945, the remaining vessels of the Hollywood Fleet were transferred to the newly formed Coastal Craft Section, and were once again commanded by Sub-Lieutenants or Lieutenants of the RANR or RANVR.

For further information, see: Appendices – Naval Auxiliary Patrol (NAP)

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HMAS *Esmeralda* (formerly *Tanda*)

Tanda was constructed in Tasmania by Percy Coverdale at Battery Point, Hobart. She was launched in early August 1927 for Sydney architect R A de T Prevost who wanted '*the best motor boat south of the Line*'. The Mercury newspaper²⁸¹ reported her to be of 45 feet (13.71m), however, Ellerker identified she was 48 feet (14.63m) with a beam of 12 feet 6 inches (3.81m). The newspaper reported '*She is indeed much more than an ordinary pleasure craft. She is a deep-sea vessel, and will be given an opportunity to prove her qualities in this direction quite early in her career for she has to go to Sydney under her own power*'. She included a large four berth cabin forward with a '*much larger*' cabin aft, a commodious galley with electric stove and ice box, and the best arranged and ventilated engine room '*seen in any motor boat on the Derwent or in Port Jackson*'. *Tanda* arrived in Sydney on 18 August 1927 after a 1,170 km voyage having weathered high seas in Bass Strait.²⁸²

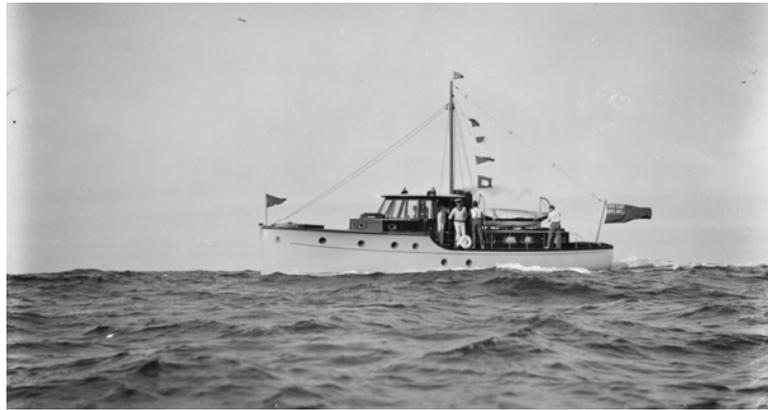
By Saturday 10 April 1937, *Tanda* now owned and renamed *Esmeralda* by Mr and Mrs Claude Carter won the second event in the cruiser race on the RMYC Rear-Commodore's Day.²⁸³ On the same day, the new owners entertained guests including the Lady Mayoress, Mrs G Parkes and Alderman Parkes on board the vessel.

²⁸⁰ For example see the Navy Daily published on 2 June 2017, '*Nations combine to remember losses in Sydney Harbour*' regarding the 75th commemoration of the '*Battle for Sydney*' which refers to '*Navy auxiliary patrol craft*'.

²⁸¹ Mercury (Hobart), 1 August 1927, p.5

²⁸² The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August 1927, p.11

²⁸³ The Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 12 April 1937, p.9



Sailors relaxing on the motor yacht *Tanda*.²⁸⁴

A fortnight later, she was a competitor for the RMYC 'W Heine Anzac Trophy' for cruisers. Being a handicap race over two miles (3.2km), *Esmeralda* was to start last in the C Class Cruiser Handicap with a time penalty of 3½ minutes.²⁸⁵ It is unknown how she fared.

Ellerker advised the Navy her original Parsons engines had been replaced in 1938 with new high speed Hercules or Kermath diesel engines.

Esmeralda was formally requisitioned by the Navy on 25 September 1941, and on 6 October 1941 the Naval Board approved for *Esmeralda* to be sent to the Ford shipyard for 'hull work' to prepare her for naval operations.²⁸⁶ Ellerker in their report for *Toomere*, confirmed the owner's valuation of £4,500, a Lloyds value for the Navy of £3,500, and the price finally paid by the Navy of £3,500. There is no record of the negotiation process, or if an 'Impressment Order' had been issued, or when the parties reached agreement.



HMAS *Esmeralda*.²⁸⁷

Esmeralda was commissioned on 20 November 1941 under the command of Sub-Lieutenant John A Dennis RANR. Denis remained as her commander to 1 June 1942.

²⁸⁴ NLA Trove Pictures – 161951380

²⁸⁵ The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 April 1937, p.22

²⁸⁶ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/6400 – *Lolita* - Sinking due to explosion in engine room 13/6/45, p.67

²⁸⁷ RAN Sea Power Centre – Australia. Note the single full size depth charge on the stern (there would be one each side) and smaller depth charges in the crates on the bow. The photograph was probably taken in late 1942 after the smaller depth charges were introduced.

At 48 feet (14.63m), she was the smallest, and having been constructed in 1927, she was also the oldest vessel of the Hollywood Fleet. She was fitted with a single .303 Vickers machine gun and depth charge chutes to port and starboard at the stern. Each chute held a single depth charge.

Esmeralda, did not take part in the Battle of Sydney Harbour. She remained moored to the wharf due to engine trouble.

Reg Andrew, former commander of *Seamist* and *Lolita* recalled in his interview²⁸⁸ with Carruthers, that *Esmeralda* had spent much of her time at the wharf due to problems with her engines. Of all the vessels of the Hollywood Fleet, the National Archives holds more records for defect rectification work on *Esmeralda* than for any of the other vessels.

The Sydney Log records *Esmeralda* departing Sydney on 13 August 1944 for Air Sea Rescue duties at Darwin. She never arrived. In November 1944 she was at Cairns '*making good engine defects*'.²⁸⁹ In December, the NOIC at Darwin reported she was not required and consideration was given to appoint her to Merauke on the south-east coast of New Guinea to replace another vessel. However, she was then reported to be in transit to Brisbane and expected to arrive in the '*next few days*'. The Log for the Small Craft Base at Brisbane records her arrival from '*Northern Ports*' on 21 December 1944, with sundry defects and awaiting directions.

There are no Reports of Proceedings for her, other than a single page dated 1 March 1945 advising she had spent the entire month at the Fairmile ML base in Brisbane undergoing refit.²⁹⁰ By February 1945 she was being stripped for a '*major*' refit and being prepared for the removal of her main engines. She remained in refit till she was '*paid off*' in January 1946 and held for disposal.²⁹¹

She was advertised for sale by the Department of the Navy on 2 March 1946 with inspections to be made in Brisbane.²⁹² She was being sold without engines, but according to an advertisement for the sale in a Rockhampton publication, it appears the refit may have returned her to her pre-war condition. She was advertised with '*owners cabin*' and saloon, six berths, '*glassed*' wheelhouse, '*well equipped galley*' and sound-proofed engine room.

Esmeralda was purchased by Laurie Coleman, formerly of the RAAF, for £1,150 to be used for '*tourist traffic*' between Mackay and the Whitsunday Islands. She was described at the time as previously being used as an Air Force rescue craft²⁹³ with a speed of 10 knots with '*plenty more in reserve in case of emergency*'.

She arrived in Mackay, in June 1946 after a 53 hour journey from Brisbane. Coleman had installed two Ford Thorneycroft 100 hp V8 petrol engines. After refurbishing, she made her first trip to Brampton Island on 16 June.²⁹⁴ Whales were sighted as she made one of her trips in September and in early January 1947, her skipper reported sighting a mine whilst returning from Linderman Island.²⁹⁵ The following month, during a storm, she broke her mooring at Paxton's Wharf, Mackay and drifted downstream endangering other vessels. In March, she was nearly consumed by fire when the launch *Seaway*, also owned by Coleman and moored adjacent to *Esmeralda*, was '*transformed to a floating furnace after an explosion*'. The fire spread to *Esmeralda*'s awning before being doused from shore

²⁸⁸ ANMM, Object No. 00047664: Voice interviews by Reginald Andrew ... relating to the Sydney Harbour Attack

²⁸⁹ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/4344: *Esmeralda* – Allocation to Merauke

²⁹⁰ NAA: AWM78, 108/1: HMAS *Esmeralda*: Reports of Proceedings

²⁹¹ NAA: AWM78, 381/1: Small Craft [Fairmile, ML] Base, Brisbane: reports of Proceedings., and NAA: AWM78, 108/1: HMAS *Esmeralda*: Reports of Proceedings

²⁹² The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1946, p.14

²⁹³ There is no record to support this.

²⁹⁴ Daily Mercury (Mackay, Queensland), 12 June 1946, p.2

²⁹⁵ Daily Mercury (Mackay, Queensland), 9 January 1947, p.2

based fire hoses. Two people aboard *Esmeralda* were struck by flying glass as the explosion shattered windows *'in every direction'*.²⁹⁶

Between 1947 and 1949, Coleman continued to promote his tourist operations with the *'splendidly appointed Esmeralda'* for multi-day cruisers of the *'beauty of the Whitsunday Passage with its numerous islands'* and *'excellent coral reef gardens'* with fishing, swimming, aquaplaning and sunbathing.

In December 1949 with Coleman and others, she visited Cooktown, the adjacent islands and the reef.²⁹⁷ At some point in time, Coleman sold her to a Vic Johnston,²⁹⁸ and in December 1954, she was purchased by Roy Markwell. She was moored in front of his home in Fairfield on the Brisbane River just upstream from Roy's engineering business. Apparently, Roy did not like her original vertical bow and wanted a more *'modern sleeker appearance'*. He gave her a new raked bow which increased her waterline length to 49ft 6in (15.01m).



Esmeralda in Queensland waters, c1960s.²⁹⁹

By 1960, she was being advertised in the Australian Women's Weekly³⁰⁰ for *'luxury 5-day cruisers'* from Proserpine.

Roy sold her in in the mid 1960s. Between 1963 to 1969, she was included in *'TAA Fly-away Holiday'* advertisements for cruisers through the Whitsunday Passage and to *'most of the Reef islands'*.³⁰¹ She was spotted at the Hamilton Island Marina in the late 1980's with the name of *Ralda*.³⁰²

In 1992, she was advertised in the Tradeboat magazine with the name of *Lady Margaret*. She was spotted by Northern Territory safari operator Simon Kyle-Little. Simon recalled her being in Sydney at the time, but she was sailed to Brisbane from where she was trucked to Darwin. On arrival in Darwin, Simon was appalled her bow had been unsupported during the long overland journey and had dropped by a *'foot'*. Notwithstanding, the fault was rectified when she was placed in the water and the timbers sprang back into alignment.

For the next five years, *'the great old boat'* became the mainstay of Simon's safari business, sailing out of Darwin along the Arnhem Land coasts, past Melville Bay where *Steady Hour* was destroyed in March

²⁹⁶ Daily Mercury (Mackay, Queensland), 20 March 1947, p.2

²⁹⁷ Townsville Daily Bulletin (Queensland), 6 December 1949, p.1

²⁹⁸ This recent history has been revealed through the research work of Colin Grazules and members of the Facebook Page: *Boats and Ships Built at Battery Point*. See also *Industrious, Innovative, Altruistic: The 20th Century Boat Builders of Battery Point*, Nicole Mays, Navarine Publishing, 2018

²⁹⁹ Photo courtesy of the Markwell family

³⁰⁰ The Australian Women's Weekly, 20 April 1960, p.41

³⁰¹ The Canberra Times (ACT), 3 February 1969, p.9

³⁰² Mays, N., *Industrious, Innovative, Altruistic: The 20th Century Boat Builders of Battery Point*, Entry for Tanda

1945, and onto the safari base camp on the Walker River at Blue Mud Bay to the west of Groote Eylandt.

Simon has fond memories of her. She '*served me amazingly well*' and '*gave a lot of people a lot of pleasure*'.

Her story continues from the Cullen Bay Marina, Darwin in January 1997, where *Lady Margaret* was found by Sale (Victoria) based plumber and gas fitter Mal Howarth. After inspecting her, including a dive in the crocodile infested harbour, Mal swapped his dive boat for her and had her trucked to Paynesville on the Gippsland Lakes.



Arrival at Paynesville boatyard Feb 1997 after the overland journey from Darwin.

Over a period of years, she underwent extensive repairs. Mal found she had been leaking badly as worms had '*eaten completely through the hull*'. She was nearly a year on the hard stand while the hull and engines were rebuilt. Topsides were restored once she was back in the water at Paynesville boatyard and in her pen at Raymond Island. During the work, the shipwrights discovered her former name of *Esmeralda* on the rear of her *Lady Margaret* name plate.



Restoration underway at Paynesville Boatyard Circa 1997.

Her current owner, Bill Maxwell and his wife Yvonne, purchased her in March 2018 after seeing her at Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes, following the 2018 Paynesville Classic Boat Rally. After some further work, and ninety-three years since she was launched, she will be returning to Tasmania with her original name – *Tanda*.



Former HMAS *Esmeralda*, now renamed *Tanda* on the Gippsland Lakes.³⁰³

HMAS *Esmeralda* was recently included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories'.³⁰⁴



HMAS *Kiara* (formerly *Penelope*)

Penelope was the first motor cruiser requisitioned by the Navy.³⁰⁵ Her first owner, R S Harden placed his order with Halvorsens in June 1938. Designed by Harold Halvorsen as an 'express cruiser', she was one of the smallest of the Hollywood Fleet at only 50 feet (15.24m), but one of the most striking of all the vessels requisitioned by the Navy into war service. Harold declared her hull lines to be 'about as perfect as you can get'.³⁰⁶ The vessel was completed in 1938.³⁰⁷



Penelope on Sydney Harbour.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Photo on the Gippsland Lakes courtesy of Bill Maxwell. Photos above on truck and on hardstand courtesy of Mal Howarth.

³⁰⁴ Following a successful representation to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs in early 2020, for the vessels histories to be included, the RAN Sea Power Centre has recently begun to include the histories. An early copy of these histories was provided to Sea Power to assist them.

³⁰⁵ AWM 78/418/1 - Sydney Log

³⁰⁶ Svensen, R., *The Halvorsen Story*, p.82

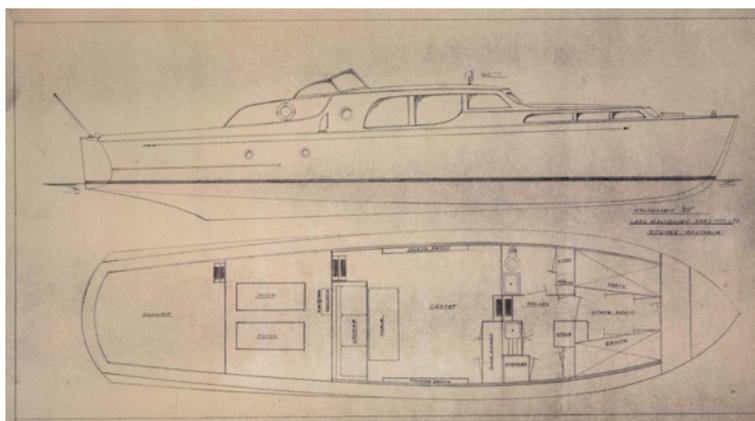
³⁰⁷ ANMM - <http://collections.anmm.gov.au/objects/64602>

³⁰⁸ Halvorsen photograph album, No. 2 held by the ANMM



Gwen Mills and Margit Halvorsen relaxing on the 'express cruiser' *Penelope* circa 1938.³⁰⁹

Penelope was requisitioned on 21 February 1941 and surveyed in April 1941 on behalf of the Navy.³¹⁰ The Lloyds surveyor valued her at £3,000. She was powered by two 8 cylinder Chrysler marine engines each delivering 140hp. Given her small size and the power of the engines, she was the fastest of the Hollywood Fleet and included a saloon, pantry with petrol stove and refrigerator, lavatory, fore cabin with two bunks and a cockpit. Unlike the other vessels, she was fitted throughout with an automatic fire extinguishing system. Details of negotiations between Harden and the Navy have not been found. The price paid by the Navy is unknown.



General arrangement plan of the 'express motor cruiser' *Penelope*.³¹¹

By May 1941, she was back at Halvorsen's being reconditioned for the Navy. On 9 May 1941, the Naval Board dealt with a dilemma. A ship by the name, *Penelope* had already been commissioned into the Royal Navy. To avoid confusion, the Board determined the requisitioned *Penelope* would be named HMAS *Kiara*, meaning White Cockatoo.³¹²

HMAS *Kiara* was also the first of the Sydney motor cruisers to be commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy on 26 May 1941 under the command of Lieutenant Hugh C Brown RANVR.³¹³ According to the Navy's 'Ship Index Cards', she was fitted with a single .303 Vickers machine gun. There is no record of her being fitted with depth charges.

³⁰⁹ Halvorsen photograph album, No. 2 held by the ANMM

³¹⁰ NAA: MP150/1, 674/205/690 – Report of survey of Hull and machinery, and valuation survey of SS *Penelope*. This record includes details of requisition and purchase.

³¹¹ ANMM - <http://collections.anmm.gov.au/objects/64602>

³¹² NAA A2585, 1938/1941/Reference Copy – Naval Board Minutes, 1939-1941, Meeting 9 May 1941

³¹³ NAA: AWM78, 418/1: Sydney Log

On 20 June 1941, she sailed to Broken Bay, 20 km north of Sydney, for three days for 'working up', and on 29 June 1941, *Penelope* as HMAS *Kiara*, departed Sydney for Darwin, accompanied by the stores ship, HMAS *Southern Cross*.³¹⁴

On 1 July with one engine broken down, she was taken in tow by *Southern Cross* steaming dead slow in a short heavy sea. As the weather moderated, *Kiara* proceeded under her own power and both vessels reached Brisbane the following day. Repairs were completed and both vessels proceeded north through the Barrier Reef. *Kiara* again developed engine problems and was taken in tow to Townsville. Following further repairs, both vessels sailed again and arrived in Cairns on 16 July. Repairs were completed on the gearbox and both vessels sailed from Cairns on 21 July and arrived at Cooktown the following day. Both vessels continued their journey and arrived at Thursday Island on 26 July. *Kiara* was refueled and departed for Darwin the following day. En-route, both vessels anchored at Elcho Island and Popham Bay before arriving in Darwin on the evening of 1 August 1941.



Penelope being transformed into HMAS *Kiara*.³¹⁵

Kiara was never to return to Sydney.

In late July 1941, the defence authorities were concerned that Boyne Harbour to the west of Darwin may provide a landing area for enemy forces to launch an attack on Darwin. Following a reconnaissance which confirmed the threat, *Kiara* with HMAS *Vigilant* conducted a survey of the upper reaches of the harbour. Additional early duties included carrying out trials with anti-mine equipment and guarding the passenger and cargo vessel SS *Zealandia*.

On 21 October 1941 whilst undertaking further survey duties, she struck a rock and was holed. She was beached and later brought into harbour for repairs. In December she commenced her main duties as a Boom Patrol Vessel which she continued throughout her remaining time at Darwin. In addition, she assisted with searches for 'downed' planes, including a missing Hudson bomber in the Clarence Strait area. She was at Darwin during the first and later air raids on the port and city. At times she was stationed for air observation duties to provide fore-warning of enemy attacks and was stationed for air sea rescue duties during bombing raids. For the later period of 1943, she was out of action awaiting repairs to her engines. She was 're-commissioned' for a return to service on 26 March 1944, and in mid 1944 she was joined by other Halvorsen motor cruisers, *Seamist* and *Steady Hour* which had arrived on 22 May 1944. With the war moving north away from Darwin and with no further need of the boom net, HMAS *Kiara* was 'paid off' on 27 September 1944.

On 11 August 1945, she was advertised by the Department of Navy for sale at Darwin,³¹⁶ and was subsequently purchased by Flight Sargent C P Malvern on 1 November 1945 for £385.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ NAA: AWM78, 316/1: HMAS *Southern Cross* [and HMAS *Kiara*]: Reports of Proceedings

³¹⁵ Halvorsen photograph album, No. 2 held by the ANMM

³¹⁶ Army News (Darwin), 11 August 1945, p.4

³¹⁷ RAN Sea Power Centre - Australia: Ship Index Cards, HMAS *Kiara*

Although she is included in the Navy's list of vessels actively involved in the defence of Darwin, HMAS *Kiara* is not included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories', and there is no record or photograph of her at the Australian War Memorial. Other than the report of her voyage north from Sydney to Darwin in company with *Southern Cross*, and the odd reference in the Darwin reports, there is no other record – there are no Reports of Proceedings from her commander.

HMAS *Kiara* was awarded the 'Darwin 1942-43' Battle Honour for her duties during the Japanese bombing raids.³¹⁸ Her actions were also recognised on a memorial plaque in Darwin, unveiled in 1992.³¹⁹



HMAS *Kiara* and *Winbah*, bottom row, right side. Main text on plaque below.³²⁰

Royal Australian Navy

Dedicated 19th February 1992

This plaque is dedicated to those members of the Royal Australian Navy who served in the ships listed below and HMAS Melville (Shore base) on 19th February 1942 during the 1st Japanese air raid on Darwin and those who defended Darwin, during subsequent raids. It honours those who made the supreme sacrifice.

'Lest we forget'

...

*This plaque was unveiled by the Federal President of the Naval Association
CDRE J L W Merson RAN Ret'd*

Like other vessels of the fleet, nothing more is known of her activities after the war. HMAS *Kiara* is not included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories'.

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HMAS *Leilani* (formerly *Dawn*)

Leilani was constructed by W L Holmes and launched on or about 24 March 1936 for George Raymond Vaughan of Camperdown.³²¹ At the time she was launched, she was named *Dawn* and was included on the register of the RMYC. From newspaper reports, it appears the Vaughans were enthusiastic members

³¹⁸ https://web.archive.org/web/20110614064156/http://www.navy.gov.au/w/images/Units_entitlement_list

³¹⁹ <https://vwma.org.au/explore/memorials/1664>

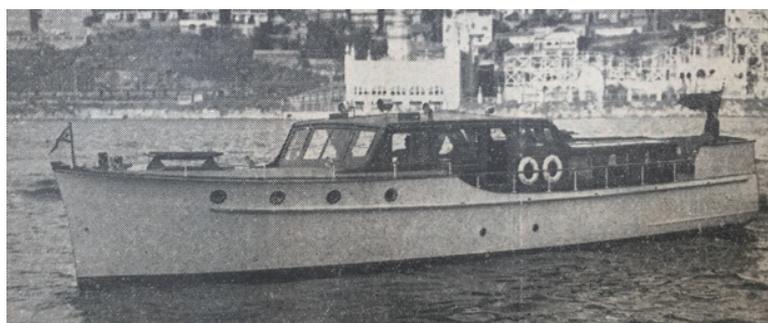
³²⁰ <https://vwma.org.au/explore/memorials/1664>

³²¹ Referee (Sydney), 26 March 1936, p.12. See also NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1769

of the Rose Bay branch of the RMYC and participated in many events. Ray also became the Vice-Commodore of the club.³²²

Dawn was 55 feet (16.76m) with a breadth of 13 feet 6 inches (4.11m). Keel, frames and bottom stringers were of spotted gum, decks were beach and planking was of New Zealand Kauri. She included; saloon, galley with refrigerator and gas range, a two berth and a single berth cabin aft, a forward two berth cabin, toilet and shower. She was powered by twin 105 horse-power 'Gray' engines giving a speed of fourteen knots. She was described by Holmes as representing a '*definite step forward in cruiser design*' and considered to be possibly the most modern cruiser of her size yet seen in Sydney.³²³

Whilst little is known of her early history or when Vaughan changed her name to *Leilani*, her contribution to the future war effort was impressive. She was requisitioned on 18 June 1941.³²⁴ On 23 October, by letter written on the letterhead of '*Filmcraft Laboratories, Expert Motion Picture Photographers etc*', Vaughan confirmed receipt of a survey report from the Navy.³²⁵



Dawn - 'A palatial cruiser' following her launch.³²⁶

The Lloyds survey on behalf of the Navy valued her at £3,000. While she was constructed in 1936 for £3,732, Vaughan valued her at £4,000 at the time she was requisitioned by the Navy. The Director of Engineering (Naval), who was to have a significant involvement in the purchase of many of the vessels, recommended she should be purchased for £3,000. Given the substantial difference, the Naval Board recommended negotiations be entered into to purchase the vessel. As with *Lolita*, the task of negotiation was given to Mr Tennant of the Contract Board and like the Director of Engineering (Naval), he also was to have a significant involvement in the requisition of the other Sydney motor cruisers. At the time the purchase cost of *Leilani* was being negotiated, negotiations were also being conducted for the acquisition of *Steady Hour*, *Yarroma*, *Seamist*, and *Silver Cloud*. The owner of *Leilani* was clearly not alone, in desiring fair and reasonable compensation for the loss of his vessel.

Leilani was formally commissioned as HMAS *Leilani* on 21 July 1941 under command of Warrant Officer J M Gault RANR(S). Gault continued as her commander to 17 November 1942. She was armed with one .303 Vickers machine gun mounted aft (however the 'Ship Index Cards' record she was fitted with two, presumably with the second mounted on the fore deck), with depth charges on the stern.

Tennant and the owner met on 29 December 1941. Tennant's record of the meeting confirms Vaughan was informed that with depreciation of 12½% for the first year, and 10% for the following years, the depreciated value was only £1,772. Vaughan considered the sum as '*totally unacceptable*'. He advised Tennant he had re-decked her with 2in beech in 1940, replaced galvanised nails with copper nails and strengthened her with additional '*knees*'. When asked to consider a sum of £2,500, Vaughan said he would '*think the matter over*'. He responded the following day having confirmed her value at £4,000 by two '*builders of repute*'. Both had indicated a boat's life from a depreciation point of view of 25 to 35

³²² Referee (Sydney), 24 September 1936, p.16, 11 February 1937, p.18

³²³ The International Power Boat and Yachting Monthly – April 1936

³²⁴ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1769 – Motor vessel *Leilani*

³²⁵ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1806 – Motor yacht *Leilani* – On survey report

³²⁶ Referee (Sydney), 26 March 1936, p.12

years which would give a fair depreciation rate of 4% or less per year. Given the advice, Vaughan said he would not consider the figure of £2,500. He told Tennant that while he was quite prepared to settle on a fair and reasonable basis, he was not prepared to sell at a 'bargain price'.



HMAS *Leilani* with Fort Denison in the background.³²⁷

Following an exchange on 5 February 1942, Vaughan intimated he would apply for an assessment by a Compensation Board. An 'Impressment Order' was issued with an amount of £3,000 to be paid for the permanent purchase of the vessel. In March, the Naval Board handed the matter to the Crown Solicitor.

Whilst *Leilani* did not take part in the Battle of Sydney Harbour, she continued patrol duties as a vessel of the Hollywood Fleet at Sydney, Port Kembla and Newcastle.

In September 1944, together with *Lolita*, she was fitted with new twin Ford V8 Vosper conversion engines. On 8 November 1944, *Leilani* in company with HMAS *Three Cheers*³²⁸ and AM 1496³²⁹ departed Sydney for Brisbane, via Newcastle and Coffs Harbour. On reaching Coffs Harbour, the port engine required extensive repairs due to an 'oil stoppage'. It was proposed to forward a new 'Vosper V8' engine to be installed by local mechanics. She departed Coffs Harbour on 29 November,³³⁰ and on the following day, three years and five months after she had been requisitioned, Vaughan accepted payment of £3,000.

By December, *Leilani* was at the ML Repair Base, Brisbane 'en-route to New Guinea'.³³¹ Whether she was towed to Brisbane like *Lolita* or sailed under her own power is unknown. She submitted a 'fairly comprehensive Defects List' and was on the slipway for four days. She proceeded to sea but returned when the commanding officer considered he had struck a submerged object near the mouth of the Brisbane River. She was found to be undamaged and was towed by *Yunnan* to Townsville with *Lolita*.

However, a report confirmed *Leilani* was three days overdue into Townsville and an air search was launched on 21 December by planes from the Flying Boat Base at Bowen. One report said she had been damaged in a collision en-route from Rockhampton to Townsville.³³² However, the NOIC at Townsville confirmed she had run out of fuel and was towed into harbour.

³²⁷ AWM Photograph 300965

³²⁸ A new 58 foot (17.6m) vessel acquired in November 1942 and used as a diving boat and later as a general duties boat. She served in New Guinea, Morati and Thursday Island before returning to Sydney. See <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-three-cheers>

³²⁹ AM1496 was a 38 foot (11.6m) 'fast supply launch' engaged in 'intelligence duties' in the Solomon Islands and New Ireland areas. See AWM Photograph 079999

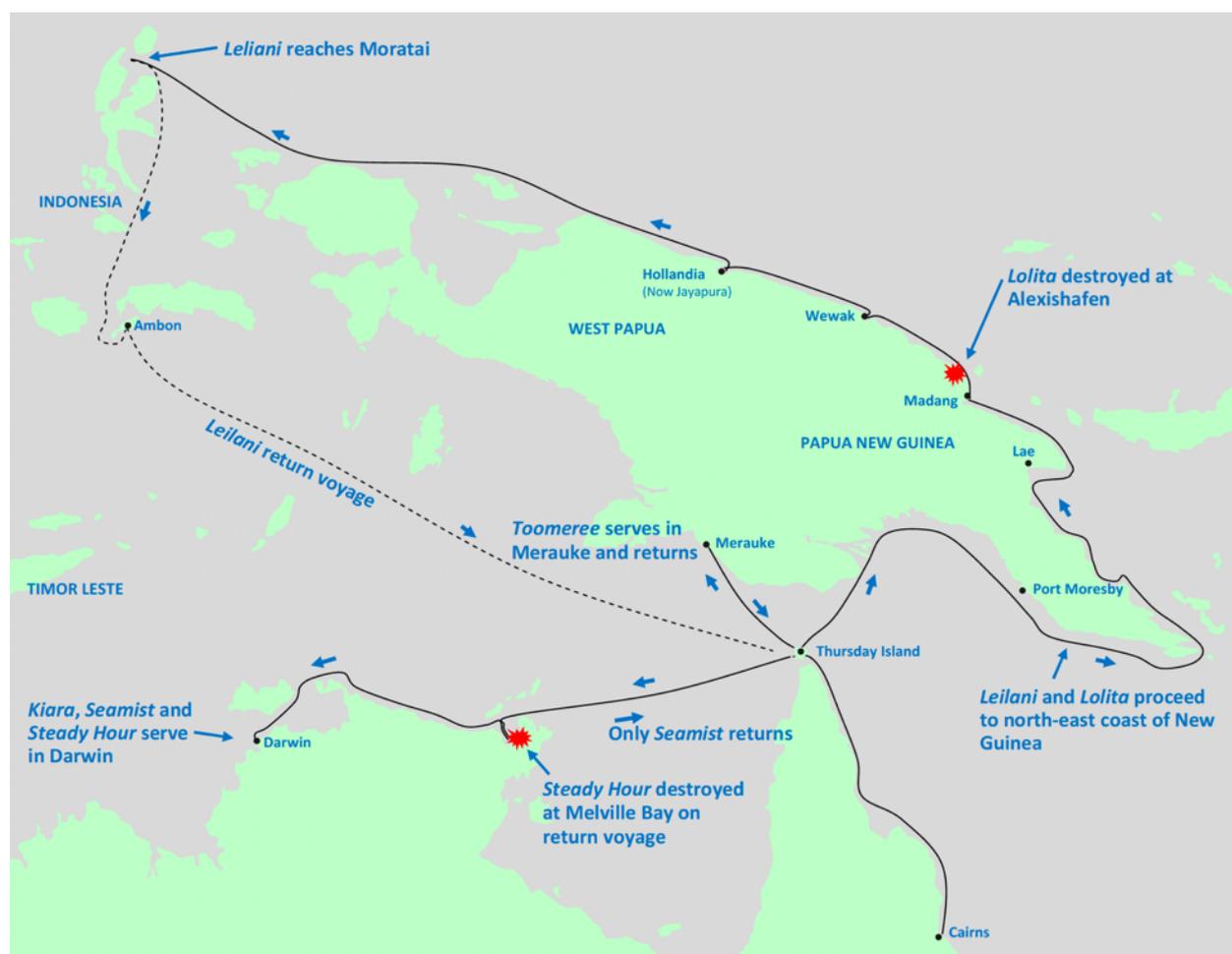
³³⁰ NAA: AWM78, 418/1: Sydney Log

³³¹ NAA: AWM78, 381/1: Small Craft [Fairmile, ML] Base, Brisbane: Reports of Proceedings., December 1944

³³² <https://www.ozatwar.com/raaf/1fbmuraaf.htm>

A report by the NOIC at Townsville on 26 December 1944, confirmed the commander of *Leilani* complained that on leaving Sydney he had only been given three days to prepare for the voyage from Sydney and did not have any sailor with mechanical knowledge to look after his engines. The NOIC's report also confirmed she had suffered the same engine problems as *Lolita* and questioned if she was to be sent onwards to Madang. He also confirmed she carried no important spares. The NOIC advised, the ships complement should include a competent rating with mechanical knowledge.

By April 1945, *Leilani* was at Hollandia (now Jayapura) on the north coast of New Guinea acting as a pilot vessel,³³³ and in June she underwent repairs in preparation to be sailed to Morotai in Indonesia, located north-west of New Guinea.³³⁴



Routes of *Leilani*, *Lolita*, *Toomeree*, *Steady Hour*, *Seamist*, *Kiara*.

In his September 1945 report,³³⁵ the commanding officer of HMAS *Cootamundra*, H J Hull, then at Morotai, said:

'Cootamundra weighed anchor at 1600I, 26th and with paying off pennant flying, slowly circled all HMA Ships at anchor, after which HMAS Leilani was taken in tow and course was set for Ambon, the first stage of the voyage to Melbourne.'

He continued:

³³³ NAA: AWM78, 387/1: Coastal Craft [ML] Administration, New Guinea: Reports of Proceedings., Report of March 1945 dated 4 April 1945

³³⁴ NAA: AWM78, 387/1: Coastal Craft [ML] Administration, New Guinea: Reports of Proceedings., Report of May 1945 dated 4 June 1945

³³⁵ NAA: AWM78, 93/1: HMAS *Cootamundra*: Reports of Proceedings

'Voyage to Ambon was uneventful, ship arriving AM 29th. Fuel was obtained from HMAS Bowen and ship sailed PM for Thursday Island.'

There are no further official reports from *Cootamundra* or *Leilani*, however in an interview in 2004, Charles Hile who served on *Cootamundra*, confirmed *Leilani* was towed to Sydney, with a stop at Port Stephens due to rough sea conditions.³³⁶

Leilani was 'paid off' on 19 November 1945.³³⁷ On 3 January 1946, she was offered for sale to the previous owner, Ray Vaughan for the sum of £2,000. He was given 10 days to respond. Vaughan said he was not interested in repurchasing *Leilani* at that price.

She was advertised for auction on 3 February 1946 as a '35 ton bridge deck motor cruiser' with 'twin V.8 Vosper Petrol Engines'. Other vessels to be auctioned with her on 16 February 1946 included the 65 foot twin screw motor cruiser *Valkyrie*, and the 56 foot motor cruiser *Shangri La*, along with a collection of other smaller vessels and numerous 'lighters'. Inspections were conducted at Rozelle Bay in Sydney. The auction proceeded and *Leilani* was sold for £2,900 to R Dewley of Five Dock.

Nothing more is known of her. HMAS *Leilani* is not included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories'.

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HMAS *Marlean*

Marlean, built by J Williams and Sons at their Bayview boatyard in 1938, was launched in 1939. At the time of requisition, she was owned by Kyalla Investment Co Ltd, represented by W J Stuart of Camperdown. Stuart was a proprietor of the construction firm Stuart Brothers, Builders and Contractors. The Navy's initial survey identified she was 59 feet (17.98m) in length which had been increased by 10 feet to 69 feet (21.03m). Her beam was 14 feet 6 inches (4.42m). Keel and frames were of spotted gum with huon pine planking. She was powered by two six cylinder Gray marine engines each of 105hp. She was arranged to sleep eight persons in three double and two single berth cabins and included a deck saloon, dining saloon, toilet, shower room, and an annex galley at the aft end of the dining salon which included a built in refrigerator.

Both the owner and Lloyds surveyor valued her at £4,500. The Lloyds surveyor confirmed her length at 69 feet – ie with the 10 foot extension.

Formally requisitioned on 17 September 1941, *Marlean* was commissioned into the Navy on 30 November 1941 under the command of Warrant Officer L P Smith RANR(S). On 10 January 1942, Acting Sub-Lieutenant John R Coupe assumed command. He was replaced on 20 February 1942 by Commissioned Officer from Warrant Rank RANR(S) Eric S Macpherson who was to continue in command to 1 June 1942. *Marlean* was armed with .303 Vickers machine guns fore and aft and depth charge racks on the stern.

On 8 November 1941, the Naval Board approved the transfer of *Marlean*, together with *Nereus* and *Winbah*, to Darwin. She was appointed to serve as a tender to HMAS *Platypus* at Darwin.³³⁸ For her service in Darwin at the time of the bombing, HMAS *Marlean* was awarded the 'Darwin 1942' Battle Honour,³³⁹ yet there is no record of her arriving at Darwin or serving in Darwin. It appears the transfer did not occur, because on 27 April 1942, just twelve weeks after the first Japanese bombing raid on

³³⁶ <http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1605-charles-hile#>

³³⁷ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/5451: Motor vessel *Leilani* – Disposal

³³⁸ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1785 – Motor cruiser *Marlean*

³³⁹ https://web.archive.org/web/20110614064156/http://www.navy.gov.au/w/images/Units_entitlement_list

Darwin, it is documented that *Marlean* (together with *Steady Hour*) returned to Sydney Harbour from patrol duties at Port Kembla³⁴⁰ and all three vessels – *Marlean*, *Nereus* and *Winbah*, were at anchor in Sydney Harbour on 31 May 1942.



HMAS *Marlean*.³⁴¹

In January 1942, *Marlean* was approved to be fitted with six depth charges and the Director of Engineering (Naval) recommended she be purchased for a sum of £3,500. The following month, the purchase was handed to the Contract Board for negotiation at or below the maximum price, of £4,000. The negotiation was placed in the hands of Tennant.

By April 1942, the parties had agreed to a purchase price of £4,000 but the matter remained to be finalised.

During the Battle of Sydney Harbour, following the first explosions, *Marlean* proceeded to the western end of the boom net to assist the protection of the harbour. After the Battle of Sydney Harbour, HMAS *Marlean* continued patrol duties as part of the Hollywood Fleet at Sydney, Port Kembla, and Newcastle.

The Navy's purchase of *Marlean* was finalized in June 1942 for the agreed sum of £4,000.

The following month, she was reported providing 'screen cover' off Newcastle for *SS Allara*, which had been damaged in a Japanese submarine attack.³⁴² The *Allara* was carrying a load of sugar from Cairns to Sydney and had been torpedoed, which blew off her rudder and propeller. Tugs raced from Newcastle and towed her into port.

In February 1943, *Marlean* left Sydney on a 'special duty'. Three days later she reported sighting a submarine at the entrance to Botany Bay and dropped depth charges. She reported a large oil patch and bubbles. The possibility of a submarine was investigated but discounted.

On 14 April 1944, the command of *Marlean* was transferred to the Naval Auxiliary Patrol (NAP). At the time of transfer, all RAN personnel were returned to HMAS *Penguin* for reassignment and replaced with NAP members.

Marlean left her mooring at the NAP base in Rushcutters Bay for patrol duties on Sunday 12 November 1944.³⁴³ She was never to return. She was commanded that day by acting commanding officer Munro, as Arnott, the appointed skipper was on sick leave.

Marlean arrived 'on station' at her designated patrol location at Obelisk Bay – at the same buoy to which *Nereus* had been moored when she was consumed by fire in July 1942. One of the crew lit the stove to make coffee whilst another began to heat water to wash up. The stove had 'previously given

³⁴⁰ NAA: AWM 78, 418/1: Sydney Log. Both vessels departed for Wollongong on 24 April 1942.

³⁴¹ AWM Photograph 301915

³⁴² NAA: AWM78, 437/1: Shore Establishment – NOIC [Naval Officer in Charge], Newcastle (HMAS *Maitland*): War Diary

³⁴³ NAA: MP1049/5, 2026/27/107: Loss of HMAS *Marlean*

trouble and was working badly'. One of the burners was not working and had been partially dismantled. There was a *'dull'* explosion and the stove and galley were engulfed in flames. Both seamen were forced from the galley. The acting commander ordered all hands to use extinguishers, but the seat of the fire was inaccessible owing to the flames and smoke.

With fire rapidly consuming *Marlean*, the acting commander ordered all primers to be removed from the depth charges and the life raft to be deployed. As the fire could not be contained, the acting commander ordered the ship to be abandoned. The crew climbed into the raft and pulled away.

HMAS *HDML 1358* was on patrol nearby and the commander, Lieutenant Swarbrick, observed smoke issuing from *Marlean*. He immediately proceeded at maximum speed towards the burning vessel later recounting in his report:

'Through the binoculars I could not see any one on board but noticed the depth charges still in the chutes on the port side. I then ordered the dinghy to be made ready with the intention of releasing the depth charges if possible.'

Having already approached the vessel, Swarbrick considered it was unsafe to approach any closer and ordered his Oerlikon gun to be loaded. He warned four civilians in a nearby private launch, and the captain of the Pilot Steamer *Captain Cook* which was standing by, to clear the area due to the imminent danger posed by the depth charges. After drawing *'150 yards'* (135m) from *Marlean*, he ordered shots to be fired along *Marlean's* waterline in an attempt to sink her. Some of the shots ricocheted off the water and hit the adjacent beach and hill. Others found their mark and *Marlean* was holed in many places, but *Marlean* refused to sink.

Twenty-five minutes after the fire started there was a massive explosion, as a depth charge on the port side detonated, blowing *Marlean* to pieces sending burning debris over a wide area including the adjacent hill.

At the time, *Marlean* carried a good deal of explosive petrol and arms. She had been refueled earlier, carried small arms ammunition and also carried six Mark VII and four *'Midget'* depth charges.

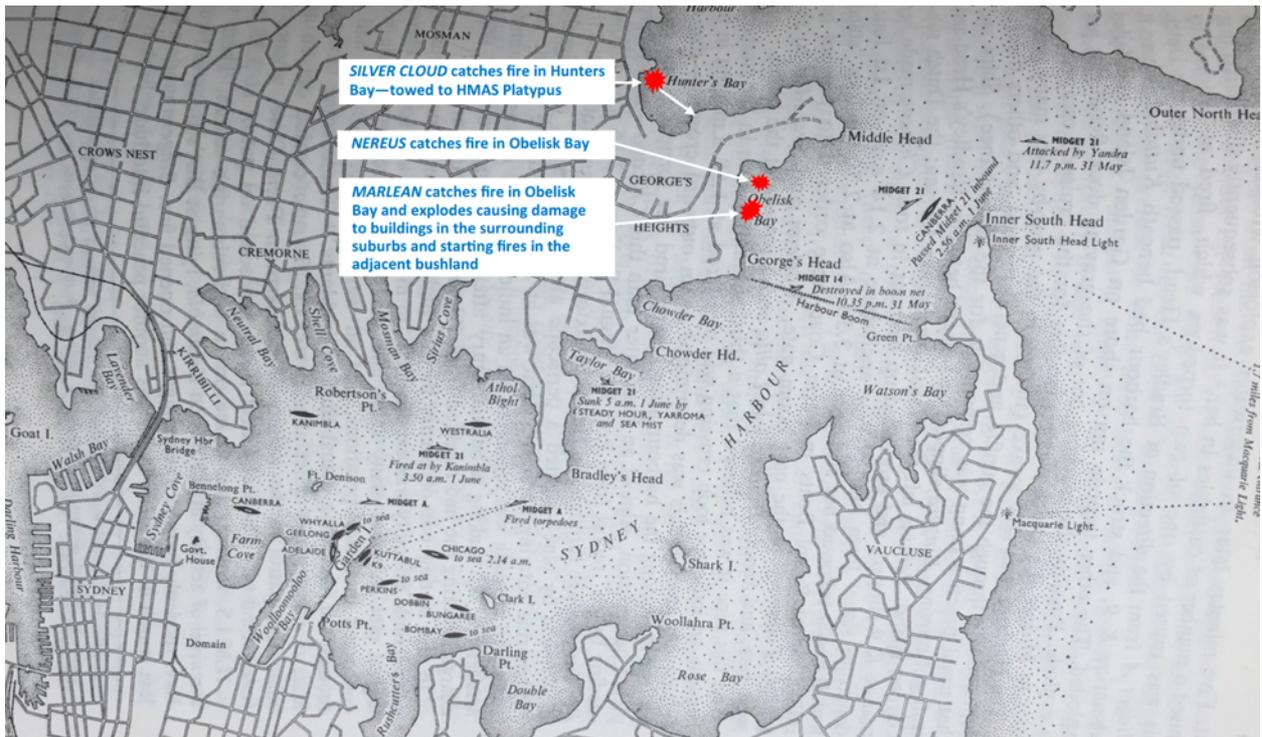
The explosion shattered the evening peace, with the sound being heard from La Perouse in Sydney's south, to Killara in the north. The following day's newspaper reported damage to homes as far as Watsons Bay and Balmoral. Thick scrub on the foreshore was set alight by the burning debris thrown there by the explosion.³⁴⁴

The following morning, the Sydney Morning Herald gave a vivid account of how the commander of the Pilot steamer, *Captain Cook*, saw the vessel on fire as he was returning to port and had come to the aid of *Marlean* and her crew. She quickly launched a motor dinghy to rescue the six sailors in the life raft who were having a hard time escaping from the burning vessel because the tide was forcing them back towards the burning ship. *'They were in a very tight spot'* said the Captain. Two crew in the dinghy from the *Captain Cook* took them aboard and when they had barely gone *'100 yards'* (approx. 90m), *Marlean* exploded.

Fire brigades helped by soldiers and sailors from nearby military barracks rushed to the fires in the bushland which had spread close to valuable properties. Police attended and moved many small children who had been playing in the bush at the time of the incident, to the safety of nearby houses. The damage caused by the explosion resulted in claims for repairs for broken windows and chattels, and cracked walls from twenty-two surrounding residents. The Commonwealth Government settled the claims via the War Damage Commission with the final account being paid by the Navy.³⁴⁵

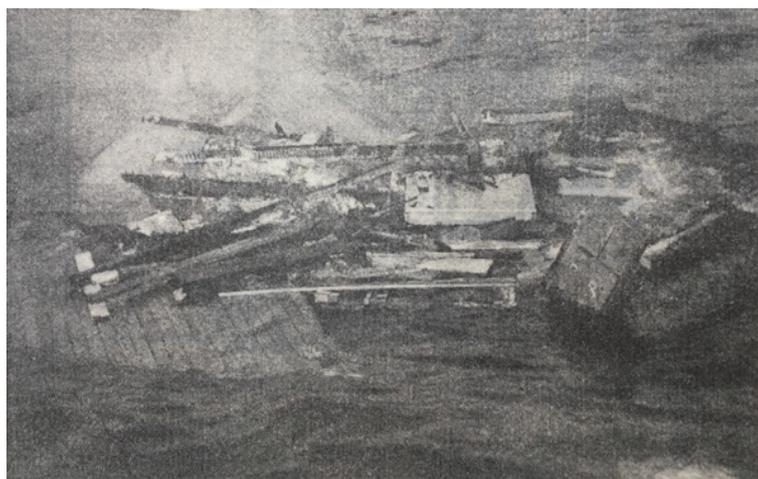
³⁴⁴ The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 November 1944, p.1 and 4

³⁴⁵ NAA: MP151/1, 438/201/222: Loss of HMAS *Marlean*



Location of loss of *Marlean*, *Nereus* and *Silver Cloud*.³⁴⁶

A Board of Inquiry was assembled. All members of the crew, acting commander Munro, Skipper Arnot and Swarbrick of *HDML 1358* were examined. In the report to the Naval Board on 18 December 1944, the Board of Inquiry accepted the fire was caused by careless handling of the kerosene fueled 'Aladdin' stove, and although the crew was 'comparatively new' to *Marlean*, all should have been aware of earlier Orders relating to the 'Prevention of Fire in NAP Boats'. The Board also established that fire drills had not been carried out and determined the acting commander would be informed that he had 'incurred the displeasure of the Naval Board for his negligence in not regularly exercising the Ships Company at Fire Stations and did fail to carry out the instructions contained in pamphlet 'Prevention of Fire in NAP Boats''. Probably a harsh outcome for Munro given he was merely the acting commander on the day of the fire.



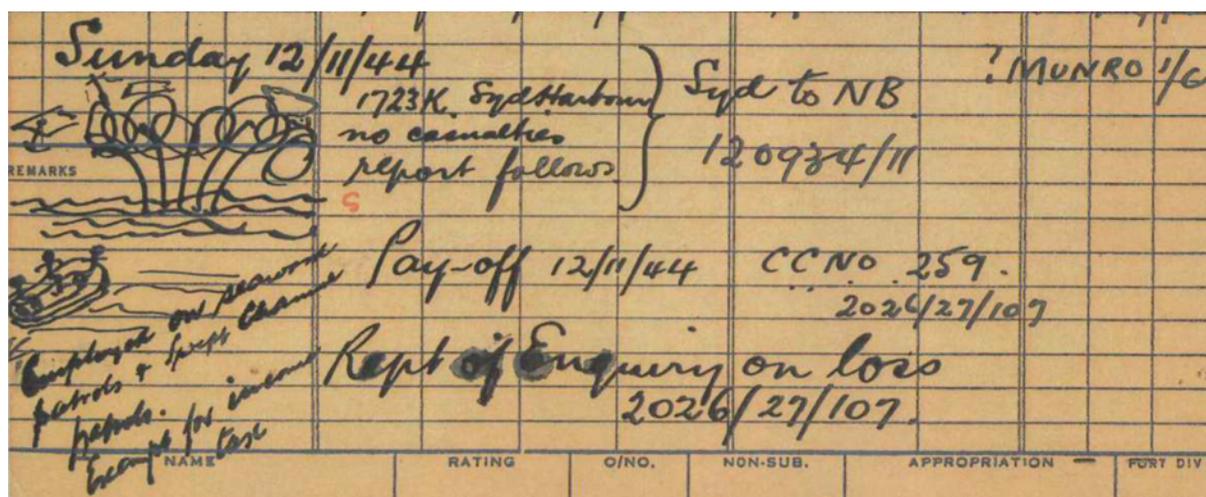
The remaining wreckage of *Marlean*.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Base map by Gill, H., *Royal Australian Navy 1942-1945*, Vol. 2, p.69

³⁴⁷ The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 November 1944, p.1

It was observed the 'potential fire danger associated with the operation of kerosene cooking stoves in Motor Patrol Boats has long been appreciated, and many orders and instructions have been issued on the subject, but it seems to be almost impossible to overcome the human error element in the operation of the stoves'. It was also recorded that over 3½ months earlier in July 1944, orders had been issued for diesel oil burning stoves to be installed in other vessels, but the order had not been issued for the Channel Patrol Boats including those of the Hollywood Fleet. It had taken the Navy over two years after the loss of *Nereus* and the near loss of *Lolita* in March 1943, to issue the order, and it still didn't apply to the remaining vessels of the Hollywood Fleet.

By the time of the Inquiry, divers had located the wreck but had been unable to locate any remaining depth charges.³⁴⁸ Perhaps the force of the explosion had been exacerbated by the explosion of all the remaining depth charges.



A wag at the Navy Office recorded *Marlean's* destruction on the 'official' record card³⁴⁹ with an appropriate sketch including the crew escaping in the life raft. There is no indication of any remaining wreckage.

The Navy's list of ship Honours, records *Marlean* was awarded the 'Darwin 1942' Battle Honour, which means she would have been at Darwin during the first or subsequent bombing raids between 19 February 1942 and into 1943. However, given she was commissioned in Sydney on 30 November 1941 and departed for Wollongong on 24 April 1942 and was in Sydney for the Battle of Sydney Harbour, it seems implausible that she would have travelled to Darwin, and returned to Sydney. There is no record of her being in Darwin.³⁵⁰

HMAS *Marlean* is not included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories'.

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HMAS *Miramar*

*Miramar II*³⁵¹ was built for Stuart F Doyle, Commodore of the Royal Motor yacht Club and Managing Director of Union Theatres. She was designed by America's leading naval architect, John H Wells of New

³⁴⁸ NAA: MP1049/5, 2026/27/107: Loss of HMAS *Marlean*

³⁴⁹ Ship Record Cards held by Sea Power Centre – Australia

³⁵⁰ NAA: AWM78, 400/2: RAN Administrative Authority – Darwin Naval Base (HMAS Melville): Reports of Proceedings., Part 4

³⁵¹ On 13 June 1934 another vessel with the name of *Miramar* (Note the 'i') was launched in Brisbane for Mr E R Hayles. She had been constructed at the Newstead boatsheds of Norman Wright. She was 90ft with a beam of 18ft 6in and was designed to carry 300 passengers for the Morton Bay and Brisbane River tourist traffic. See *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 14 June 1934, p.12 and *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 29 September 1934, p.11. This is not the vessel that was requisitioned by the Navy. *Miramar II* (Note the 'A') was acquired by the Navy, however in some documents such as the Sydney Log, she was incorrectly recorded as *Miramar* (With an 'I'). Throughout this historical record I have adopted her correct name, *Miramar II*.

York with Mr A C Barber acting as the local architect. At 75 feet (22.86m), she was the largest of the Hollywood Fleet vessels. She was said to be more luxurious than any other motor vessel in Sydney at the time she was launched, and described in Sydney newspapers as a '*floating palace*' – with six staterooms, crew's quarters, separate dining and lounge saloons and with a cruising range of a thousand miles (1,600km).³⁵²



Miramar II at the 1937 Pittwater Regatta.³⁵³

Miramar II was constructed by Halvorsens at their Neutral Bay boat shed. Her depth from bottom of keel to the top of the wheelhouse was 18 feet (5.49m) with a weight of 55 tons fully equipped. The keel was a specially selected single piece of 12 inch x 8 inch (300 x 200mm) spotted gum, 69 feet (21.03m) in length cut in a single piece on the South Coast of NSW. All the timber, ribs, floor stringers and lower build stringers were also of South Coast spotted gum with the planking of selected New Zealand kauri. Outside deckhouses were constructed of Indian teak cut from the log by the Halvorsen shipwrights. Interior decorations were from Queensland maple, walnut and sycamore.³⁵⁴ *Miramar II* was launched on 15 March 1930.

She was powered by two 6 cylinder Hall-Scott engines, each of 200hp with a 3 to 1 reduction gear giving a speed of 14 knots. All steering and engine controls were duplicated on deck so the engines could be controlled from the steering column.



Some of the guests at the launch. The three central figures are Commodore Stuart F Doyle, Mrs Doyle and A D Walker.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Svensen, R., *The Halvorsen Story*, p.44

³⁵³ Sam Hood Collection, 17394, Courtesy State Library of NSW

³⁵⁴ The Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly – April 1930, p.27-31. includes a comprehensive description.

³⁵⁵ The Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly – April 1930, p.22-23



Miramar II takes to the water at Neutral Bay.³⁵⁶

As the flagship of the Royal Motor Yacht Club and owned by a high profile raconteur, *Miramar II* was regarded as, 'truly a nautical show stopper'.³⁵⁷



The dining saloon showing the fireplace, radio cabinet and library. Note the embossed allegorical ship design on the ceiling.³⁵⁸



The owners state room furnished with carved sycamore, velour curtains and vieux rose carpets.

Miramar II was taken over by the Navy on 26 May 1941 and commissioned as HMAS *Miramar* on 19 August 1941 under command of Lieutenant Charles J Inman RANVR who was to serve as her commander till September 1942. For service as a naval vessel, she was armed with a single .303 Vickers machine gun mounted on the fore deck. She was fitted with ASDIC anti-submarine detection equipment and carried depth charges on her stern deck. With her varnished timber painted uniform naval grey, and with her windows boarded up like other vessels, she lost her former glory.

Nothing is known of the Navy's negotiations with Doyle to settle the purchase price, however according to entries on the Register of British Ships, the negotiations may have been protracted, as the purchase was finally completed on 12 February 1943.

³⁵⁶ The Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly – April 1930, p.22-23

³⁵⁷ Svensen, R., *The Halvorsen Story*, p.45

³⁵⁸ Interior photographs from The Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly – May 1930, p.6-7



HMAS *Miramar*.³⁵⁹



HMAS *Miramar* at the Garden Island wharf following the sinking of HMAS *Kuttabul*.

It appears that during the Battle of Sydney Harbour, *Miramar* was moored to the wharf on the eastern side of Garden Island where she remained during the Battle.³⁶⁰ The torpedo which destroyed HMAS *Kuttabul*, also destroyed the divers workboat. With the immediate need to dive into the wreckage of *Kuttabul* in search of survivors, the divers were in desperate need of a replacement vessel. The above photograph (AWM 300936) shows *Miramar* in close proximity to the wreckage and raises the possibility she was used as the divers replacement tender.

For the remainder of the war, it appears HMAS *Miramar* served her time on patrol duties on Sydney Harbour. She was transferred from the Channel Patrol Boat fleet to the Naval Auxiliary Patrol on 19 April 1944,³⁶¹ and was 'paid off' for disposal on 17 July 1945.³⁶² She was advertised for sale on 9 December 1945,³⁶³ and purchased by a Mr Waterford and Mr W Passau for pleasure cruising on the Hawkesbury River.³⁶⁴ The new owner adopted her original name of *Miramar II*.

³⁵⁹ AWM Photograph 301924

³⁶⁰ Carruthers, 2006, p.38

³⁶¹ NAA: AWM78, 223/1: HMAS *Miramar*: Reports of Proceedings., p.28

³⁶² RAN Sea Power Centre - Australia, Ship Histories, HMAS *Miramar*

³⁶³ The Sun (Sydney), 9 December 1945, p.3

³⁶⁴ The Sun (Sydney), 21 June 1946, p.3

On Thursday night of 20 June 1946, she was nearly destroyed when she was blown ashore in a gale. *Miramar II* broke her moorings in Kogarah Bay and drifted on to rocks at Carrs Park near Tom Uglys Point. A week later she was re-floated and found to be undamaged.³⁶⁵ By the end of the year, she was being advertised for a 'luxury Christmas cruise' on the Hawkesbury River.

However, in March 1947, it appears *Miramar II*, was owned by bookmaker Arthur Browning when she was reported calling at Wisemans Ferry on the Hawkesbury River. She was described as being '*much admired as it possesses all points dear to the heart of boat lovers*'.³⁶⁶



Miramar II ashore at Carrs Park.³⁶⁷

By June 1947 a chain of tourist hotels on Queensland islands was being announced by Pioneer Tours, a subsidiary of Ansett Transport Industries. At the time, Reg Ansett was conducting a survey with stops at Whitsunday, Heron, Hayman and Lindeman Islands and it was reported that *Miramar II*, described as a '*10 passenger cruiser*' had been purchased in Sydney for the related tourist trade. She would be one of six similar launches for the islands trade and would begin operations from Mackay and Proserpine in August.³⁶⁸ Ansett's plans included opening hotels on islands separated by up to 320 kilometres, to give tourists a variety of holiday destinations and to cater for overseas and Australian visitors.

By September Ansett had visited Daydream Island aboard *Miramar II*, and in December, the Mackay office of the Government Tourist Bureau advised that *Miramar II* would commence charter trips to the 'Reef Islands' in early 1948. Mackay was to be her home port for maintenance and supplies. It was said she would cater for the '*affluent*', with fares at £50 per head for a six-day charter cruise with a capacity for 10 passengers.

In April 1948, with Reg Ansett aboard, *Miramar II*, called at Bowen in the course of a three week cruise. The cruise to Townsville was to enable Ansett to inspect the progress of work at Hayman and Day Dream Islands.³⁶⁹ By mid-April, with Ansett aboard, she arrived at Cairns,³⁷⁰ and before the end of the year, the '*luxury launch*' was being used to carry tourists to Daydream, South Molle and other islands, before returning to Brisbane for overhaul and repairs.³⁷¹

In early 1950, *Miramar II* was converted from an extended cruising vessel to a '*day cruiser*', to be stationed at Hayman Island resort, and to operate from Daydream Island depending on tourist requirements.³⁷²

³⁶⁵ The Sun (Sydney), 27 June 1946, p.3

³⁶⁶ Windsor and Richmond Gazette (NSW), 19 March 1947, p.2

³⁶⁷ The Sun (Sydney), 21 June 1946, p.3

³⁶⁸ Cairns Post (Queensland), 26 June 1947, p.5

³⁶⁹ Bowen Independent (Queensland), 9 April 1948, p.4

³⁷⁰ Townsville Daily Bulletin (Queensland), 15 April 1948, p.1

³⁷¹ Maryborough Chronicle (Queensland), 10 December 1948, p.2

³⁷² Daily Mercury (Mackay, Queensland), 9 February 1950, p.2

She was later fitted with two-way radio telephones to enable 'businessmen' to stay in touch as they fished in the 'lazy, tropical waters of the Barrier Reef'.³⁷³ *Miramar II* continued operating services to Hayman, Crest and South Mole islands along with a growing fleet of vessels, however, there are no records for her after 1953. HMAS *Miramar* is not included in the Navy's 'Ship Histories'.

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HMAS *Nereus*

According to the Navy's survey of February 1942, *Nereus* was owned by Sydney Arthur Smith Esq. of Wahroonga. She was 66 feet (20.12m) in length, with a breadth of 16 feet (4.88m) making her one of the larger vessels of the Hollywood Fleet. She was powered by twin Chryslers eight cylinder marine engines, each of 175hp. She had six cabins, two forward, two amidships and two aft, toilets port and starboard, lounge, saloon, a fore cabin, pantry/galley complete with refrigerator and gas stove, an engine 'room' and a bridge control cabin and cockpit. She was built of hardwood laminated timbers with oregon stringers and planking.

Her owner's value was £6,500. The formal Lloyds Register of Shipping survey of 5 November 1941 confirmed *Nereus* had been built by Lars Halvorsen and Sons in 1939. Lloyds valued her at £6,000.³⁷⁴ *Nereus* was requisitioned on 16 September 1941 and commissioned as HMAS *Nereus* on 30 December 1941.³⁷⁵ Her first commander Second Lieutenant E B Beeham of the RANVR, was replaced on 1942 by Sub-Lieutenant RANVR Harold C Eyres. He was replaced on 25 May 1942 by Lieutenant RANVR James B Griffin, DSC who was to be her last commander.³⁷⁶ Fitout work to suit naval requirements was undertaken by Halvorsens and she was approved to be fitted with six depth charges.



Nereus.³⁷⁷

As with *Marlean* and *Winbah*, she was recommended by Muirhead-Gould for service at Darwin.³⁷⁸ The allocation was approved by the Naval Board on 8 November 1941, but there is no record in the Sydney

³⁷³ Argus (Melbourne), 13 February 1951, p.5

³⁷⁴ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1786 – Motor yacht *Nereus*

³⁷⁵ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1786 – Motor yacht *Nereus*, AWM 78/418/1 Sydney Log

³⁷⁶ RAN Navy Lists

³⁷⁷ Halvorsen Album held by ANMM

³⁷⁸ NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1786 – Motor yacht *Nereus*

log of *Nereus* leaving Sydney nor in the Darwin Log of her arrival. On 1 May 1942, *Nereus* is recorded departing for Broken Bay and returning three days later in company with *Steady Hour*.³⁷⁹



HMAS *Nereus*.³⁸⁰

By January 1942, the owner's solicitor was pursuing the Navy for their position regarding compensation for charter or purchase. Muirhead-Gould sought advice from the Naval Board. Despite the Lloyds valuation, by February, the Director of Engineering (Naval) was recommending purchase for a price of £5,000. In March 1942 approval was given for negotiations with the owner. At the time, negotiations were also to proceed for *Lolita* and *Marlean*. The parties met in April 1942 and Tennant subsequently recommended to the Contract Board that a price of £4,750, less the value of rental monies paid by the Navy to that date, would '*represent a satisfactory transaction for the Navy*'. Whilst awaiting a response from the Navy, Smith's solicitor pressed that rental of £241 already paid to date, should not be deducted but should be in addition to the £4,750.

By mid-May, the Navy agreed with Smith's position and *Nereus* was purchased for the sum of £4,991 with the rent of £241 to be deducted resulting in the net purchase sum of £4,750.

It appears *Nereus* played no role in the Battle of Sydney Harbour and her whereabouts has not been established. However, Muirhead-Gould's 22 June Report, includes that on the night after the Battle, *Nereus* attacked and claimed to have sunk another submarine in Vacluse Bay. At the time of his report, Muirhead-Gould believed the claim was genuine, but later considered the report to be a false sighting.³⁸¹

By mid-June, the purchase of *Nereus* was finalized.³⁸²

On 2 July 1942, just over a month after the Battle of Sydney Harbour, HMAS *Nereus* was destroyed by fire.³⁸³ She had relieved *Yarroma* at the buoy in Obelisk Bay, on the western side of the harbour just outside the boom net.

The fire started in the engine room at about 6.00 pm, with a blast of fire through the doorway into the galley. Lieutenant Griffin, commander at the time was of the view the fire started in the batteries. He had previously dealt with the explosion of batteries in another vessel. Griffin described the very dense white smoke which he considered came from such an explosion.

³⁷⁹ NAA: AWM 78, 418/1: Sydney Log

³⁸⁰ AWM Photograph 301939

³⁸¹ NAA: MP1049/5, 2026/21/79: Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour, p.44, NAA: SP338/1, 201/37: Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour, May 31st June 1st 1942, p.145, NAA: B6121, 162K: Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour - Signals, p.167

³⁸² NAA: MP138/1, 603/246/1786: Motor yacht *Nereus*

³⁸³ NAA: MP981/1, 603/246/2452: HMAS *Nereus* – Loss by Fire

The fumes were that strong you couldn't see anything. The lights had failed and you certainly couldn't breathe there. The fumes were the worst aspect of it. They were right through the ship. I was driven away from the seat of the fire by them and had to go on the open deck.

He ordered the crew off at about 6.15 pm. Griffin himself was taken off at 6.20 pm by a fishing vessel and he proceeded to HMAS *Steady Hour* to obtain a gas mask. He then returned to *Nereus* at about 6.30 pm with another fire extinguisher. He told of going on board and into the wheelhouse but having to leave almost immediately as *'The fumes and heat would not allow [him] to stay'*.

The morning's newspaper³⁸⁴ described the fire as a *'spectacular sight for crowds'* with flames burning fiercely before burning through the rope mooring her to the buoy which resulted in *Nereus* drifting with the tide onto a group of piles where she *'stuck fast'*.

People saw a spectacular display of fireworks when small arms ammunition kept on the launch exploded in the heat and flew into the sky in all directions. Mauve flames from other burning material mingled with the crimson and yellow of the fire.

Three fire brigades attended at the nearest point but were unable to reach her with their hoses. The flames were finally extinguished by a fire float, but not before *Nereus* was burnt to the waterline. *Nereus* was later *'beached'* by *Steady Hour*.

Three days later, and ten months after she had been requisitioned, the Navy and the owner finalized negotiations and settled the purchase for a sum of £4,991. The sum included the monthly rental payments already made.

Under the direction of Muirhead-Gould, a Board of Inquiry was formed of members from the local shore base, HMAS *Penguin*. There was no *'outside'* member to ensure impartiality. The Board held a *'full and careful'* investigation into the circumstances surrounding the loss of *Nereus*, however, Lieutenant Breydon, then commander of the Hollywood Fleet who was present during the hearing, was not called to give evidence, to account for his command of the Hollywood Fleet which included *Nereus*.

The Board conducted its examination of witnesses over a single day. There were no reports from expert investigators and no fire experts were called to give evidence. The Board was unable to *'definitively'* establish the cause of the fire, but despite the views and evidence of the commander of an ignition caused by the batteries, the members of the Board were of the opinion the fire emanated from an explosion of petrol gases, but the reason for the presence of those gases could not be traced.

The Board considered there was *'no reason to suspect that the sources of the ignition was due to any form of sabotage, carelessness on the part of any member of the ship's company, or disobedience of the smoking regulations'*. But the Board considered the commanding officer had failed to take advantage of opportunities to exercise the ship's company at *'Fire Stations'* but went on to find that this was not a contributory cause for the loss of the vessel, and found that every effort was made by the *'ship's company'* to limit the extent of the fire. By October 1942, Muirhead-Gould had accepted the findings of the Board and recommended trials of CO2 extinguishers, and that *'some instruction be given to Motor mechanics before'* their appointment to petrol driven craft. He also accepted that Channel Patrol Boats had not been attached to any definite naval establishment, and subsequently appointed the fleet to the shore base, HMAS *Penguin II*.

HMAS *Nereus* is not included in the Navy's *'Ship Histories'*.

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³⁸⁴ The Sydney Morning Herald, 3 July 1942, p.5