

**Diary of William Hazeldene 1942-1944**

**Engine Room Artificer W/633**

**Born 30 June 1900 Wolverhampton, England**

*[Editor's comments in square brackets]*

**HMAS Castlemaine, 1942**

16th June. Commissioned

17th, 18th, 19th June. Trials

20th June. Take over from Williamstown Dockyard

20th, 21st June. Sweeping Trials

23rd June. Convoy to Sydney

26th June. Arrive Sydney

27th June to 5th August. Fitting out in Sydney

6th August. With convoy to Melbourne

9th August. With convoy to Sydney

11th August. Arrive Sydney

12th August. 12.2 am. Rammed For'd by Manly ferry

13th August to 25th August. Undergoing repairs

26th August. Leave Sydney for Townsville

30th August. Arrived Townsville

1st Sept. Leave Townsville with 'Swan' and convoy for Fords Creek (Milne Bay), New Guinea

4th Sept. Receive signal to say that heavy fighting is in progress at Fords Creek. Ordered to proceed with few ships to P. Moresby. 'Arunta' and 'Swan' proceed to Fords.

Sept 5th. Arrive P. Moresby

Sept 5th. Leave P. Moresby for Townsville

Sept 6th. At sea receive signal to cruise around and await convoy proceeding to P. Moresby

Sept 7th. With convoy for P. Moresby

Sept 8th. Arrive P. Moresby

Sept 9th. Ferrying troops from troopships to Wharf. Position very dangerous here, Japs within 30 miles, troops are being rushed up to front line, by motor trucks as soon as they reach the wharf. Last job on this date was to convey wounded from wharf to SS Manunda.

Sept 10th. At anchorage

Sept 11th. First Air Raid, Japs have broken through Stanley Ranges are now 22 miles from here, looks as if we are here for another evacuation.

Sept 12th. On Patrol. Later. Ordered to sea to pick up two pilots who have been sighted in a rubber float at sea, pick them up after they had been 24 hours afloat, very little the worse for their adventure.

Sept 13th. At sea a target for our own bombers. Afternoon. A little recreation leave on an island off New Guinea. Local Is.

Sept 14. At sea with convoy to Townsville.

Sept 15. At sea with convoy

Sept 16. Thro' Barrier Reef arrive Townsville

Sept 17. Leave Townsville arrive Palm Island. "Australia" "Hobart" "Phoenix" destroyers [*actually light cruisers*]

Sept 18th. A/S Patrol around Fleet at Palm Island. Return Townsville

Sept 19th. At Townsville

Sept 20th. At Townsville

Sept 21st. At sea with convoy to P. Moresby

Sept 22nd. At sea "Swan" joins us

Sept 23rd. At Sea

Sept 24th. At Sea. Attack on enemy subs: outside P. Moresby. Arrive P. Moresby. Ferry troops ashore. Two Air Raids.

Sept 25th. P. Moresby

Sept 26th. P. Moresby

Sept 27th. P. Moresby

Sept 28th. At Sea join convoy return P. Moresby. Night, Ferry American troops ashore.

Sept 29th. At Sea

Sept 30th. Arrive Thursday Is.

Oct 1st. Thursday Is.

Oct 2nd. At sea with convoy for Darwin

Oct 3rd. At Sea

Oct 4th. At Sea with convoy

Oct 5th. Arrive Darwin. What a mess! 9 ships lie on the bottom of the harbour, the funnels & derricks of them are protruding from the water. 1025 persons were killed, bodies were dragged from the water for weeks afterwards those that were washed ashore were torn to pieces, and ate by either dogs or alligators.

Oct 6th. At sea with convoy

Oct 7th. At Darwin

Oct 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th. at Darwin

Oct 12th. At sea with convoy

Oct 13th, 14th. At sea

Oct 15th. Arrive Thursday Is

Oct 16th. At Sea

17th Oct. " "

18th " Arrive Darwin

19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd. Minesweeping off Cape Don

23rd Oct. At Darwin

24th " " " Air Raid

25th " " " " " 3 only

26th " " " " "

27th " " " " " (heaviest)

28th " " " Ashore viewing bomb damage

29th " At Sea. Submarine scare supposed to be outside boom

30th " At Darwin

31st " At Darwin and Sea

1st 2nd 3rd 4th & 5th. At Sea with convoy

5th Nov. At Darwin. Take on War correspondents and Dutch residents.

6th Nov. Proceeding to Timor

7th Nov. At Sea. Dusk. Arrive Dutch Timor. White Sail & three fires act as signal from Commandos' ashore, for us to come inshore. Take stores ammunition mail & cash ashore. Pickup Governor wife & child of Portuguese Timor, who is under heavy bond to the Japs, and four Commando officers. Leave cameraman and War correspondents. [*Photographer Damian Parer was the cameraman.*]

8th Nov. At sea proceeding at full speed.

9th " At sea, arrive Darwin

10th to 14th Nov. At Darwin

15th 16th 17th & 18th. At Sea with convoy

19th & 20th. At Darwin

21st 22nd 23rd 24th & 25th. At sea with convoy

26th 27th & 28th. At Darwin, Air raids

29th. At Sea to Timor to evacuate wounded & Dutch women and children

30th. At Sea Attacked with bombs cannon & machine guns by enemy bomber from 9.20 AM to 11 AM. Most of the bombs dropped near "Armidale". Afternoon again attacked by five bombers "Armidale" again the target, two of our fighters appear, we are very happy to see these. Four of the enemy appear from the clouds for a further attack so presume fighters got one. Armidale had some very near misses.

6PM to 8 PM Attacked & machine gunned twice by enemy plane armour piercing bullets spattered over decks but no one was injured. Our two escorts have disappeared, nine enemy bombers appear flying line abreast, they fly over us twice, drop their load when passing over us the third time, bomb fragments strike the decks & side of the ship, again no one injured.

Enemy make another circuit over us, heavy cloud between them and us, this saved us from receiving another issue night time & darkness, Thank Christ. During these attacks we break our silence, signal for assistance, also suggest that expedition is futile, but receive orders to carry on.

1st Dec. 2 AM arrive off Timor steam 30 or 40 miles along coastline no sign of commando's signal or Ketch "Karoo" [*small ship HMAS Kuru*]. 4 AM turn for Darwin 8 AM sight "Karoo" which comes up alongside & discharges her cargo of men women & children on to our ship.

9 AM attacked in the rear by Jap heavy bomber this came straight at our stern very low, our Oerlikon gunners are dead on the target, bomber is forced to sheer off, jettisons her spare fuel tank and is probably damaged.

Later "Armidale" and "Karoo" receive orders to return to Timor, we are to carry on to Darwin. Afternoon pick up signal from "Armidale" she is being attacked by eight bombers & fire fighters, "Karoo" sends out message; Help.

We have several alerts but these are caused by our own planes going over to assist "Armidale" & Karoo. 9 PM Receive signal to say that two Jap cruisers are out after us.

2nd Dec. 5.30 AM. Receive message Jap cruisers have parted company, one may endeavour to intercept us near Melville Island, we are moving at full speed. 9 AM. Arrive off Melville Island without incident. Arrive Darwin. Discharge passengers.

3rd Dec. At Darwin. "Karoo" arrives back with her war scars 200 bombs were dropped around her. No word of "Armidale"

4th Dec. At Darwin, still no word of "Armidale"

5th Dec. At Sea. Can now presume "Armidale" is lost

6th Dec. At Sea

7th Dec. At Darwin. A sad day for us. "Kalgoorlie" arrives with 20 survivors from the "Armidale" Captain was among these. 80 of the crew got on to an improvised raft made with the paravanes, these chaps were machine gunned in the water by the Japs. The ship was sunk by bombs from a low level bomber, she was hit for'd and sunk in four minutes.

8th. At Sea with convoy

9th. " " " "

10th. At Sea, attacked by Jap seaplane

11th. Returning to Darwin

12th. At Darwin & Sea

13th. 14th At Sea with convoy

15th. At Sea off Wessel Is, pick up convoy for Darwin, attacked by Jap seaplane, same one that attacked us in similar position on 10th. Bombs score direct hit on S.S. Period killing 5 seriously injuring five others. We take off the wounded and administer first aid to them

16th. Off usual course avoiding sub. Again spotted by Jap floatplane it makes further attack on "S.S. Period" near misses with the bombs she dropped, we are shadowed for about two hours by this plane, our planes are still conspicuous by their absence.

17th. At Sea. Arrive Darwin

18th. 19th 20th 21st 22nd At Darwin

25th. Dec. At sea with convoy

26th. 27th At Sea

28th. Thursday Is

29th. At Sea. Pick up convoy Dutch New Guinea & Merauki

30th. At Sea with convoy for P. Moresby

31st. At Sea

### **HMAS Castlemaine, 1943**

1-1-43. At P. Moresby

Remarks:- 1-1-43. Met J. Almond at P.M. says that our men are suffering & many dying from Dysentery, Dengue & Malaria these diseases are also seriously affecting the Japs, the tracks stink of the dead of both sides. Japs are a poor lot, but are real fanatics, and will

continue to fire even after being seriously wounded many of our men have been killed in going to a wounded Japs aid, all wounded now are being exterminated before they can do any further damage.

2nd 3rd. At Sea

4th 5th. at Thursday Is

6th 7th 8th. At Sea with convoy

9th. At Sea. Arrive Darwin

*[For the next six months Castlemaine performed escort duties, mainly between Darwin and Port Moresby, but also around the waters of NT and WA, then returned to Sydney for refitting, arriving on 20 July 43. Some time after that, Hazeldene transferred to HMAS Ararat, which had commissioned at Brisbane on 16 June 1943, and in August 1943 began work as a convoy escort vessel.]*

### **HMAS Ararat, 1943**

Sept 7th 1943. Left Sydney

Sept 8th. At Sea

” 9th. At Caloundra nr Brisbane

” 10th. At Sea Exercising with Sub

Sept 11th to Oct 11th. Convoying from Brisbane

Oct 12th. At sea with convoy

Oct 16th. Arrive Townsville

Oct 17th. At sea with convoy

Oct 20th. Arrive Milne Bay

Oct 21st. At sea with convoy



Oct 24th. Arrive Townsville

Oct 28th. At sea with convoy

Nov 1st. Arrive Port Moresby. Talking to an M.P. on the wharf said that he had been escorting prisoners of war to the mainland, I asked what type were they, those from Finschhafen were well fed and a good type, those from Lae were emaciated and had been living on human flesh ours and their own. They found when about to bury some of our chaps that the buttocks had been sliced, and stomach opened, and the liver heart removed. At sea with convoy.

3.11.43. Townsville

14.11.43. Milne Bay

17.11.43. Cairns

22.11.43. Milne Bay

26.11.43. Cairns

29.11.43. Milne Bay

2.12.43. Townsville

16.12.43. Milne Bay

18.12.43. Lae. Very little sign of recent fighting. A few partly sunken ships (Japs) and uprooted trees. A large number of our bombers were seen proceeding on an expedition. Heavy raid on Goodenough I by Japs.

20.12.43. Milne Bay

24.12.43. Cairns

25.12.43. Morning in Cairns joined with the wardroom in a few drinks for Xmas day. At sea

28.12.43. Milne Bay. On patrol and escorting ships that are arriving direct from America

## **HMAS Ararat, 1944**

15.1.44. Cairns

25.1.44. Milne Bay

26.1.44. Bali Bali Bay. Goodenough I.

4.2.44. Milne Bay. On patrol, escorting

24.2.44. Cairns

13.3.44. Milne Bay

14.3.44. Langemak Bay

16.3.44. Arawe New Britain. First Australian escort vessel here since invasion. Fighting in progress twelve miles away. Heavy blasting by air took place here before the Japs were dislodged, palm trees were sheared at their tops by gun fire, a Jap gunboat partly submerged is close inshore.

Several Jap dummy barges are anchored around the harbor, these are of hessian with a wooden gun affixed forward of the bridge, they look the real thing from a distance. Jasmata evacuated [probably *Gasmata airfield*], hundreds of booby traps left.

18.3.44. Langemak Bay

19.3.44. At Sea bound for C. Gloucester N.B.

20.3.44. Arrive C. Gloucester a few signs of the recent fighting, trees along the foreshore were all stripped of foliage, also a hillside covered with shell holes, presumably contained, or was infused with Jap foxholes.

21.3.44. Arrive Langemak B

23.3.44 At sea. Fresh stores arrive on board, very welcome after ten days can-opening still no mail.

24.3.44. Arrive C. Gloucester

25.3.44. Arrive Arawe N.B.

26.3.44. Langemak B.

28.3.44. Langemak B. Toured Air strip, war cemetery and Battlefield. At the airstrip were hundreds of bombers and fighters of all types.

The war cemetery was situated in backalley the American War cemetery is alongside, some of our chaps were being interred. Witnessed six burials in ten minutes. Have read an article stating that the Yanks did all the fighting in N.G. can refute this, making a comparison of the two cemeteries I found that there were seven of our dead to one Yank, and ours are still being brought in.

Australian Battle fields visited, Finschhafen, Katika, Easy Street, Quoya R. Song R. Scarlet Beach, North Hill, Pine Hill, Flat Top, Gusika, Wareo. All of these places are marked with a sign board describing the nature of the fighting and the names of the Australian brigades or units that took them from the Japs.

All of these places are now occupied by the Yanks these have done a great job in road making, these roads are equally as good as the best country roads in Australia and all have been made in a couple of months.

29.3.44. Finschhafen

31.3.44. Langemak B.

3.4.44. Saidor. Japs are fighting 28 miles from here, raid three nights ago two planes blew up petrol dump. Expect Madang to fall before end of this week.

4.4.44. Langemak B

5.4.44. Lae, Salamua, Buna

6.4.44. Milne B

8.4.44. Goodenough I

20.4.44. Woodlark I. Rendezvous with ship proceed with her to Admiralty I.

22.4.44. 0200 sight sub 300 yards away, it crash dives, make an attack with depth charges when over the top of it, presume that either damaged or sunk it. Arrive Admiralty Islands.

23.4.44. Admiralty I's. Many signs of recent landing, shell torn trees etc. Japs are still on Manus I many are escaping in native canoes. It is not safe to wander too deeply into the jungle, Jap snipers are deadly, also it is possible to get shot by Yanks, these chaps are trigger drunk and shoot at any sign of movement in the bush. Our job is to patrol on the outskirts of the island, and if any escaping Japs are spotted we are to open fire on them; sounds like murder to me.

24.4.44. Seeadler Harbour famed as Von Lucknows [*Von Luckner's*] hide out during the last war. On an island at the mouth of this harbour lie hundreds of Jap dead. The island was strafed by low flying Kittyhawks. At sea bound for Green Island about 100 miles east of Rabaul, all to wear life jackets at all times.

25.4.44. 0245 Action stations surface craft picked up by Radar fifteen minutes suspense. A Yank cruiser and destroyer. 0800 off Kavieng New I.

26.4.44. 0700. Seventy miles off Rabaul. 1030. Arrive Green Island [*Nissan Island*]. North of Solomon [*Islands*]. 500 miles through enemy waters with a few frights but no mishaps. 2015. Action stations. Flares are being dropped around us lighting up our surroundings like day. Minutes of panic until plane identified itself as friendly, flares were dropped to show position of enemy sub, we dropped 15 depth charges on it after we had located it.

28.4.44. Off St Mathias I's.

29.4.44. Arrive Admiralty Is. Some of our boys take a run ashore, arrive back with Jap souvenirs also gruesome stories of seeing many dead Japs all decapitated, many had reached the skeleton stage. Receive orders to proceed to Melbourne for refit.

2.5.44. Milne B.

5.5.44. Townsville

9.5.44. Sydney

11.5.44. Melbourne.

*[As William Hazeldene notes, HMAS Ararat transferred to Langemak in March 1944. She was the first ship of her class to visit the recaptured Allied territory at Cape Gloucester and Arawe, New Britain.*

*Hazeldene appears to have left Ararat following the refit in Melbourne in May 1944, and the Maritime Trust of Australia has no further records of him.*

*Ararat returned to New Guinea in July 1944, and until mid 1945 was engaged in escort and patrol duties in the forward areas of the Allied offensive. On 22 July 1945, Ararat's war service came to an end when she left Langemak for refitting in Adelaide.*

*Ararat went into the F Class Reserve on 11 April 1947. She was sold on 6 January 1961 to Burns Philp & Co. Resold to Fugita Salvage, she departed for Japan on 26 July 1961 towing a floating dock. The corvette was broken up 1962.]*