

HMAS *Bunbury* – J241/ M241



Namesake: City of Bunbury, WA
Builder: Evans Deakin & Co
Laid down: 1 November 1941
Launched: 16 May 1942
Commissioned: 3 January 1943
Decommissioned: 26 August 1946

Honours and awards:

Pacific 1943–45
 New Guinea 1943–44

Fate: Sold for scrap in 1961



Displacement: 650 tons (standard), 1,025 tons (full war load)
Length: 186 ft (57 m)
Beam: 31 ft (9.4 m)
Draught: 8.5 ft (2.6 m)
Propulsion: triple expansion engine, 2 shafts
Speed: 15 knots (28 km/h; 17 mph) at 1750 hp
Complement: 85
Armament: 1 × 4-inch gun, 3 × Oerlikons, Machine guns

Depth charges chutes
 and throwers

HMAS *Bunbury* was laid down at Evans Deakin & Co Ltd, Brisbane, Queensland on 1 November 1941. She was launched on 16 May 1942 by Mrs Cooper, wife of Treasurer of Queensland and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the coastal city in WA, located 175 kilometres south of the state capital, Perth.



HMAS *Bunbury* commissioned at Brisbane on 3 January 1943 under the command of Lieutenant John Symington Bell RANR(S).

Bunbury began operational duty as an escort vessel on the east coast of Australia. At this time (January 1943) the Japanese were beginning their third and last attempt to disrupt the flow of supplies to the forward areas by stationing submarines in Australian coastal waters. However, although eleven ships were lost off the Australian coast before the enemy withdrew in May 1943, none were sunk or damaged while being escorted by *Bunbury*.

In late April 1943 *Bunbury* transferred to the northern area and based on Townsville began escorting convoys to Port Moresby and Milne Bay. These duties, which were arduous under the tropical conditions but uneventful, kept *Bunbury* almost constantly at sea until January 1944 when she proceeded to Melbourne for refit.

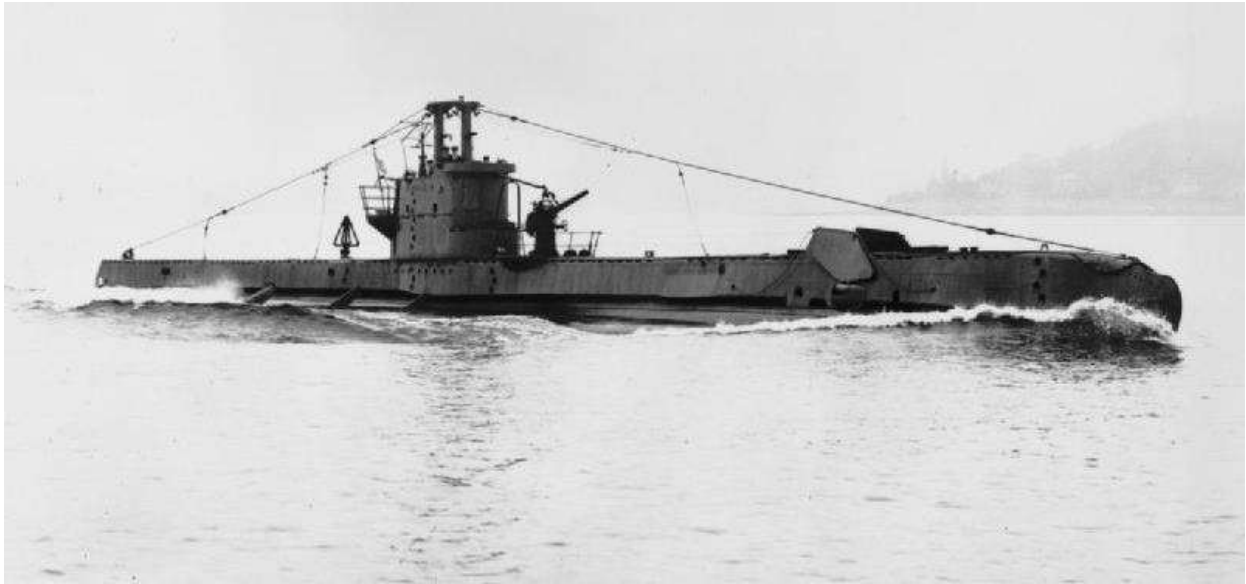
In March 1944 she returned to the New Guinea theatre, where she was engaged on escort and general duties, until forced to return to Brisbane for repairs in April 1944 after running aground at Cape Cretin. Returning to New Guinea in May 1944, *Bunbury* resumed escort duties mainly between Madang, Langemak, Hollandia and Aitape.

In August 1944 she began escorting convoys between Thursday Island and Darwin. In September she proceeded to Fremantle via the west coast, thence to Adelaide for docking.

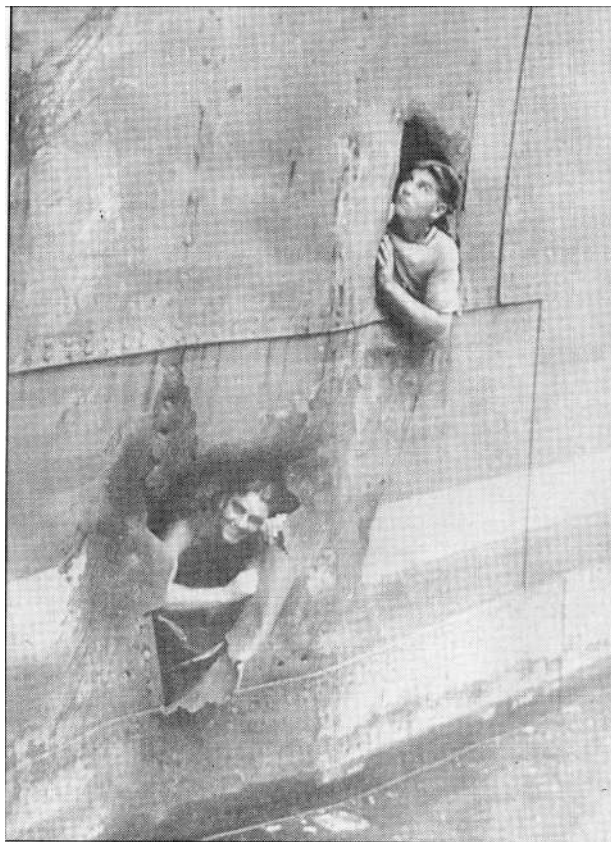


Some of the *Bunbury* crew October 1944, when the ship paid a visit to the Port of Bunbury
On 31 October 1944 *Bunbury* returned to Fremantle having visited her namesake town for the only time. Based in Fremantle she was used for tactical exercises with United States Navy submarines until 17 December.

Then just after midnight on 18 December 1944, *Bunbury* collided with the British submarine, *Sea Rover*. *Bunbury* came from Fremantle and *Sea Rover* from Indonesia. The accident occurred while both vessels were manoeuvring in the darkness waiting for each other. Both had arrived early at the rendezvous position, about 60 nautical miles north west of Rottneest.



HMS Searover



Holes in Bunbury after collision with HMS Sea Rover

The *Launceston* left from Fremantle to escort both ships back to port, and returned with them at 5.40am. *Sea Rover* was slipped the same day and had damaged bow plates removed. *Bunbury* had considerable damage with two holes in her starboard bow. Luckily, the mess room had been cleared minutes before the collision and there was no loss of life.



Bunbury was slipped on December 27 and was back in the water on January 12, ready for anti-submarine patrols off Fremantle.



HMAS Townsville (J205) and *HMAS Bunbury* (J241) lying at anchor in the Morotai Area, circa June 1945. (AWM 109368)



On 12 January 1945 *Bunbury* resumed her exercise program with American submarines until 17 April, when she sailed via Onslow and Thursday Island for New Guinea, where she operated on patrol and as a guard ship in the Mios Woendi, Biak and Morotai area.

On 7 July 1945 she sailed for Adelaide for refit, bringing her war service to a close. By the time she reached Adelaide she had steamed 88,000 miles on war service. In November 1945 *Bunbury* joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla for sweeping operations off Hobart and in Spencer Gulf. Work with the Flotilla in Australian waters continued until 29 May 1946.



Bunbury wearing the funnel number 20 as part of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla



HMAS Bunbury. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)



Bunbury arrived in Sydney on 29 May 1946 and paid off on 26 August 1946, bringing her seagoing career to a close after steaming 101,000 miles since commissioning.

Bunbury was sold on 6 January 1961 to Kinoshita (Australia) Pty Ltd for breaking up. On 26 February 1961 she departed Sydney for Japan, towed by tug *Benton Maru*.

She was broken up in Japan. Her ship's bell was presented to the City of Bunbury, where it is currently on display.



HMAS Bunbury ship's bell. (Courtesy of City of Bunbury Council)