

HMAS Cessnock – J175/B240/A114



Class	Bathurst Class
Type	Australian Minesweeper
Builder	Cockatoo Docks Sydney
Laid Down	16 April 1941
Launched	17 October 1941
Commissioned	26 January 1942
Decommissioned	12 July 1946
Battle Honours	
	PACIFIC 1942
	NEW GUINEA 1942
	INDIAN OCEAN 1942–45
	SICILY 1943
Fate:	
	Cassnock was paid off 12 July 1946 and sold for scrap to China 23 April 1947



Displacement	650 tons
Length	186 feet
Beam	31 feet
Draught	8 feet 6 inches
Speed	15 knots
Crew	85
Propulsion shafts	Triple expansion, 2
Horsepower	2,000
Armament	1 x 12-pounder gun (later 1 x 4-inch HA gun)
	1 x Bofors (later)
	Machine guns
	3 x Oerlikons (later 6, then 4)
	Depth charge chutes and throwers

Ordered for the British Admiralty and commissioned by RAN, HMAS Cessnock was laid down at Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney, NSW on 16 April 1941.

She was launched on 17 October 1941 by Lady Gordon, wife of Sir Thomas Gordon, a director of the construction firm, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the city in the Hunter Region of NSW and about 52km by road west of Newcastle.



The official launching party for HMAS Cessnock, Cockatoo Island Dockyard, Sydney.



Left: Acting Lieutenant Commander Thomas S Marchington, RNR (Ret'd), Commanding Officer HMAS Cessnock (I). Right: The Commanding Officer with his fellow officers aboard Cessnock.



HMAS Cessnock being launched on 17 October 1941.

Cessnock commissioned at Sydney on 26 January 1942 under the command of Acting Lieutenant Commander Thomas S Marchington RNR (Ret'd).



HMAS Cessnock.



HMAS Cessnock

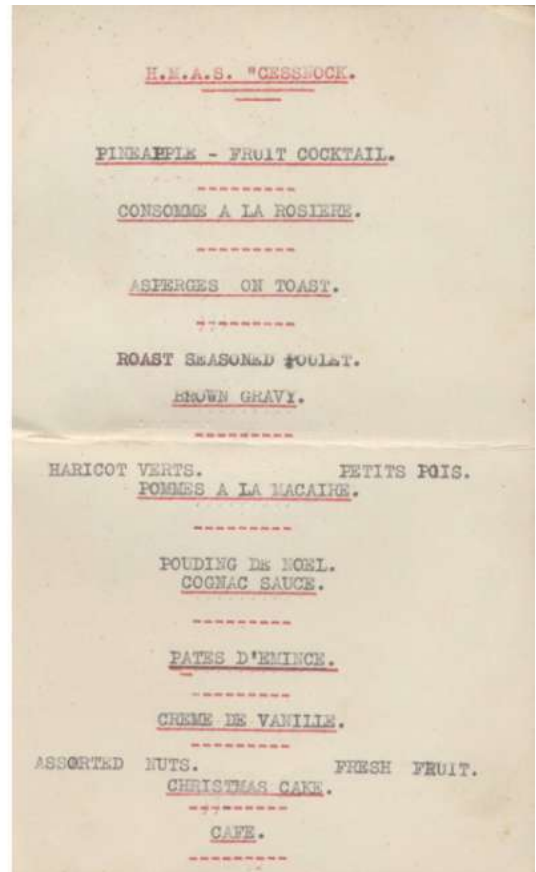
Following her period of working up in the Sydney area, *Cessnock* commenced duty as an escort vessel assigned to the forces engaged in protecting the flow of shipping between Townsville and New Guinea.

26 March 1942 at Port Moresby, attempted to tow Troopship *Taroona* which had grounded on reef. Attempt failed and *Cessnock* grounded on reef but later re-floated. 27 & 28 March in between airraids tried to refloat *Taroona* but failed. 29th March finally towed *Taroona* off reef.

In September 1942, having steamed some 26,000 miles on escort duty, *Cessnock* returned to Sydney and thence on 17 September 1942 proceeded for Albany, where, until the end of October she operated as an anti-submarine patrol vessel in King George Sound.

Followed by similar duty in the Fremantle approaches until 23 November when she sailed in company with her sister ship HMAS *Toowoomba* for Kilindini, in Kenya, to join the British Eastern Fleet.

Cessnock reached Kilindini via Diego Garcia and the Seychelles on 16 December. There for a period she operated on local escort and anti-submarine patrol duties. On 25 January 1943 she proceeded on escort duty to Aden. In February-March 1943 she was engaged escorting convoys between Aden and the Persian Gulf and on patrol in the Straits of Hormuz.

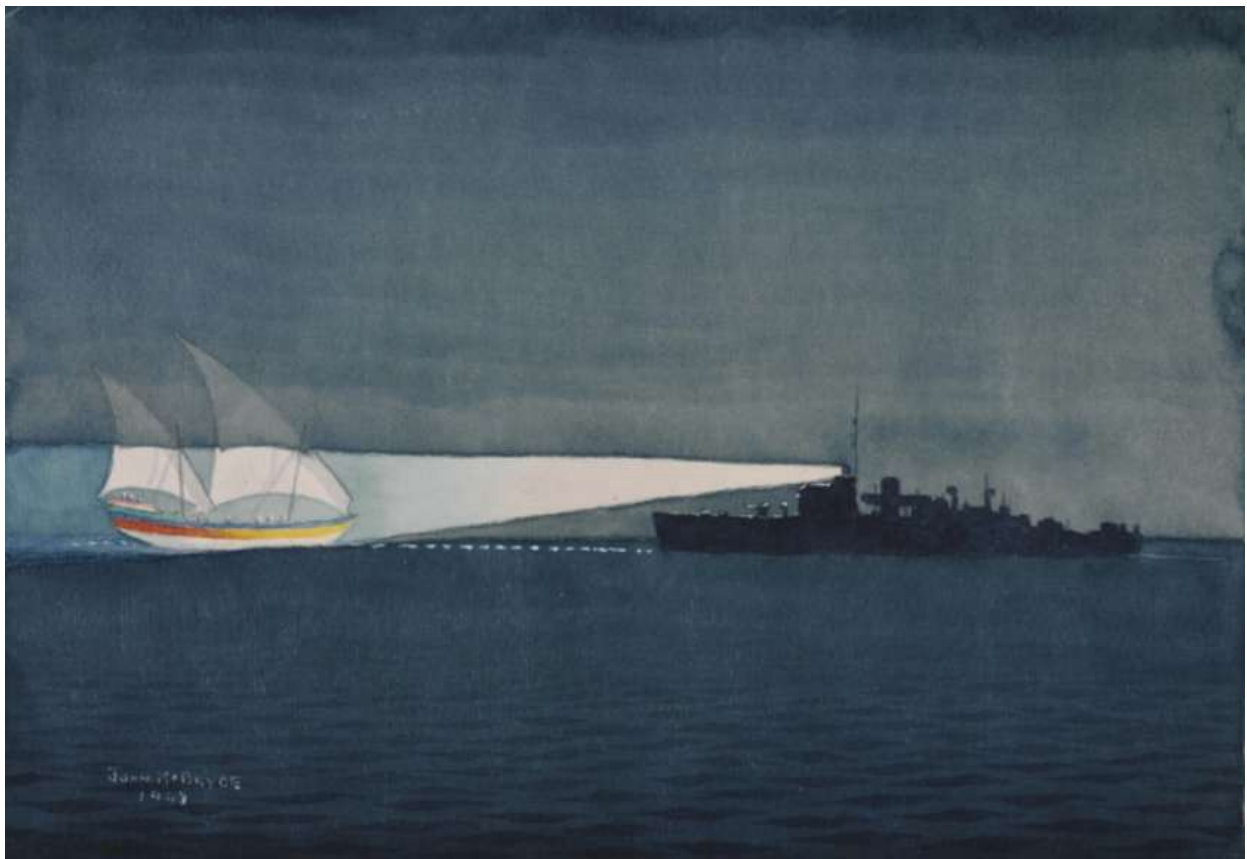


Left: Cessnock alongside. Right: HMAS Cessnock's Christmas dinner menu, circa 1942.





On 4 April she sailed from Bandar Abbas as part of an escort of a 19-ship convoy to Bombay where she had a short refit (10-29 April). On 6 May 1943 *Cessnock* reached Aden from Bombay and two days later sailed for the Mediterranean in company with HMAS *Ipswich*.



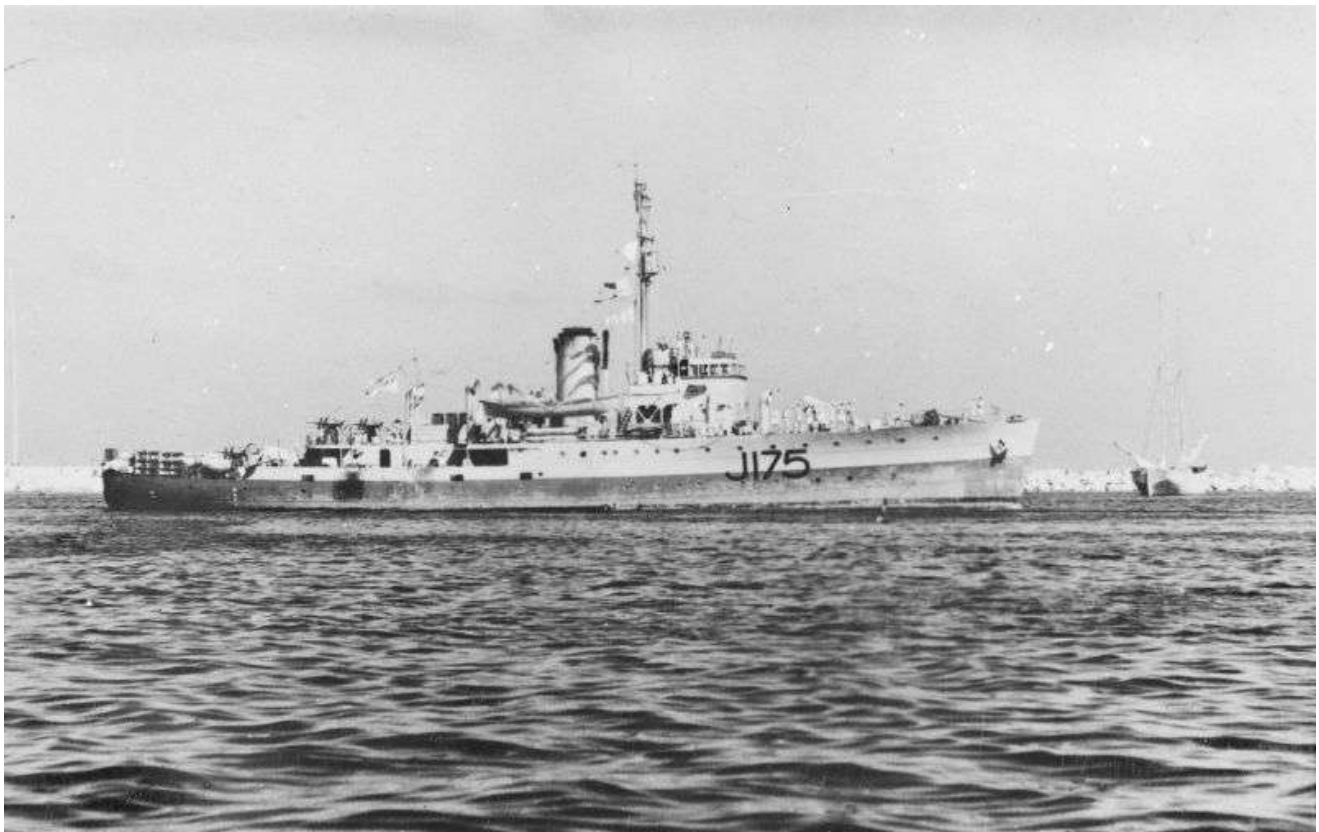
Cessnock after a collision with a dhow in the Red Sea between Aden and Suez on 8 May 1943. It was in 1943 that *Cessnock* became an active participant escorting convoys between the Persian Gulf and Alexandria. The corvette's searchlights are shining on the two-masted dhow. (John McBryde - AWM ART92898)

8 May 1943 *Cessnock* came into collision with a dhow in the Red Sea, damage to bulwark and fittings port side aft. 30 May 1943, took the Monitor HMS *Erebus* who had lost her rudder under tow, and arrived Alexandria 1 June 1943.

For the next four months she was constantly in service as an escort vessel over the entire length of the Mediterranean including participation in the Allied invasion of Sicily. On two occasions (one in August and one in September) she entered the Atlantic to rendezvous with Mediterranean bound convoys for which she acted as part escort. Each comprised 75 ships.

On 25 September 1943 *Cessnock* passed through the Suez Canal and proceeding to Aden resumed her former duty as an Indian Ocean escort vessel attached to the Eastern Fleet operating at first between Aden, the Persian Gulf and Bombay.

Escort and general fleet duty in the Indian Ocean kept *Cessnock* almost constantly at sea from the Persian Gulf, India and Ceylon in the north and as far south as East London in South Africa until January 1945. On 26 January she detached from the Eastern Fleet and departed Trincomalee for Fremantle where she arrived on 6 February 1945.



Cessnock became a unit of the 22nd Minesweeping Flotilla (HMA Ships *Cairns*, *Cessnock*, *Gawler*, *Geraldton*, *Ipswich*, *Tamworth*, *Wollongong*, *Launceston* and *Pirie*) for service with the British Pacific Fleet.

In March 1945 *Cessnock* proceeded to New Guinea and the Philippines on escort duty. Late in April 1945 she returned to Australia for refit which kept her in dockyard hands until the end of June. In July she returned to the forward areas and after hostilities had ended proceeded to Japan being present at Tokyo for the surrender ceremony. Afterwards she served in Chinese waters and in the Borneo-New Guinea area.

Cessnock returned to Sydney in January 1946, and paid off at Sydney on 12 July 1946.



Sailors aboard HMAS Cessnock. (Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library of Victoria)



Left: Cessnock arriving at Walsh Bay, Sydney, NSW with 33 AIF long service personnel from Lae, New Guinea on board, circa January 1946. (AWM 124893) Right: RAN seamen gather on the forecastle of Cessnock as she prepares to berth, circa January 1946. Note the long service personnel on the upper decks. (AWM 124894)

Newcastle Morning Herald Sat 1 Feb 1947:

Sell Corvettes at £12,500 Each MELBOURNE. Friday.-The Australian corvettes. H.M.A.S. Cessnock, Bathurst, Goulburn, Ballarat, Bendigo and Maryborough are shortly to be offered for sale in Australian ports at £12.500 each. The six ships, among the first 60 Corvettes built in Australia, cost the British Government nearly £250,000 each. With the exception of Maryborough, which will be sold in Brisbane. The corvettes will be submitted for sale in Sydney. Each ship will be offered in good order but without guarantee.



Cessnock with sister ships at Newcastle June 1946

Cessnock was sold on 23 April 1947 to C.K. Wang, for the Nan Chiao Shipping and Salvage Co Ltd, Shanghai for £12,500. Delivered 1 May 1947, renamed *Nan-Au* and converted to a Merchant ship. Broken up Hong Kong 1949.



*HMAS Cessnock's bell is now displayed in the Cessnock City Council Chambers, NSW.
(Image courtesy of Cessnock City Council).*