

HMAS *Deloraine* – J232/M232



Namesake: Town of Deloraine, Tas.
 Builder: Mort's Dock
 Laid down: 19 March 1941
 Launched: 26 July 1941
 Commissioned: 22 November 1941
 Decommissioned: 30 June 1948

Battle honours:

Darwin 1942
 Pacific 1942–45
 New Guinea 1943–44

Fate: Sold for scrap in 1956



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 1,750 hp)
 Complement: 85
 Armament: 1 × 12-pounder gun
 (later replaced by
 1 × 4-inch gun)
 2 × 20 mm Oerlikons (later
 2)
 1 × 40 mm Bofors
 (installed later)
 Machine guns
 Depth charges chutes and
 throwers

HMAS *Deloraine* was laid down at Mort's Dock Engineering Company, Balmain, Sydney, NSW on 19 March 1941. She was launched on 26 July 1941 by Dame Mary Hughes, wife of the Minister for the Navy and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the town on the Meander River in the central north of Tasmania.



The launching of HMAS Deloraine at Mort's Dock Engineering Company, Balmain, Sydney, NSW on 26 July 1941. (AWM 009317)



Left: Deloraine prior to launching. (AWM 009218) Right: Deloraine takes to the water for the first time. (AWM 009320)



Official luncheon after the launching of Deloraine. L-R: unidentified, unidentified, Commodore Muirhead Gould, Mr T Silk, managing director of Mort's Dock and Engineering Co (speaking) and Dame Mary Hughes, the launching lady of Deloraine.

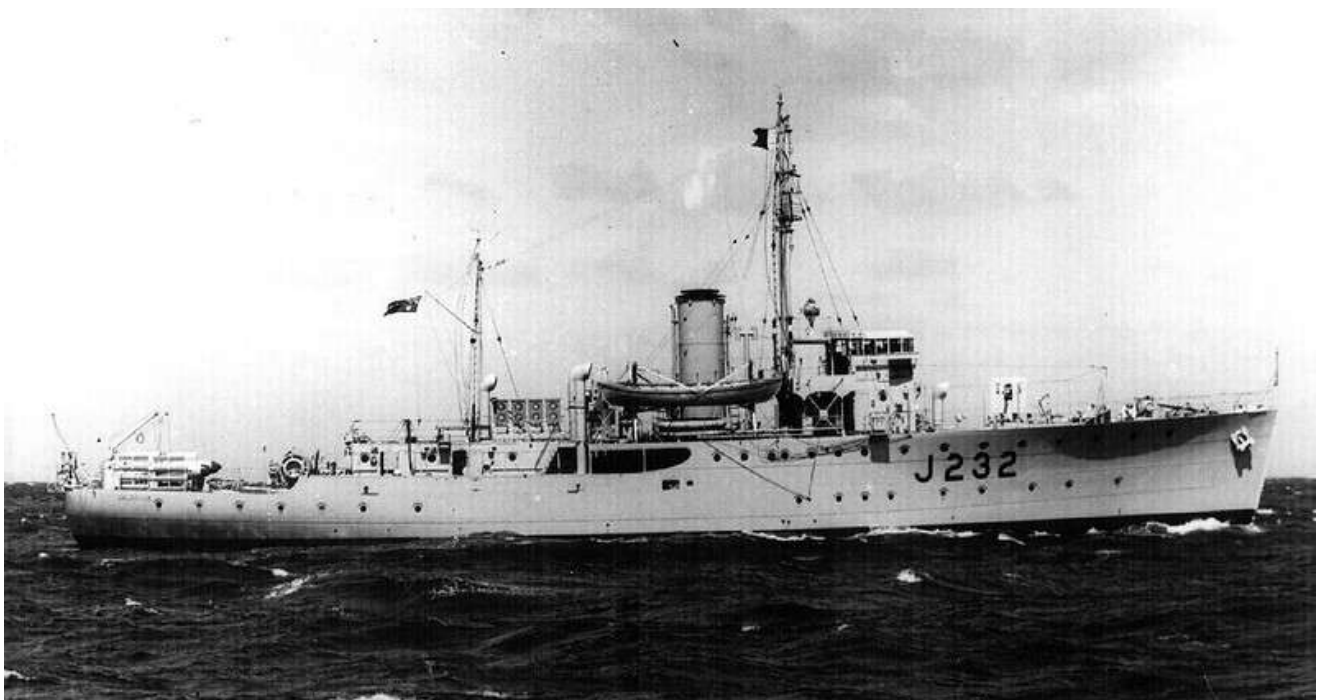
Deloraine commissioned at Sydney on 22 November 1941 under the command of Lieutenant Commander Desmond A Menlove RANR(S).



On 26 December 1941 *Deloraine* sailed from Sydney for Darwin to begin her active operational career with a period of anti-submarine patrol duty in the Arafura Sea.



Deloraine during trials



Deloraine during trials

She arrived at Darwin on 7 January and began duty protecting the harbour approaches. The first few days proved uneventful, though Japanese submarines were suspected of being in the area. Events, however, proved the suspicion to be well founded for at noon on 20 January *Deloraine*, then at sea off Darwin, received a signal 'proceed forthwith to position 12°08' south, 130°10' east, for submarine sighted 06:30 today Tuesday'. At 14½ knots she proceeded as ordered.



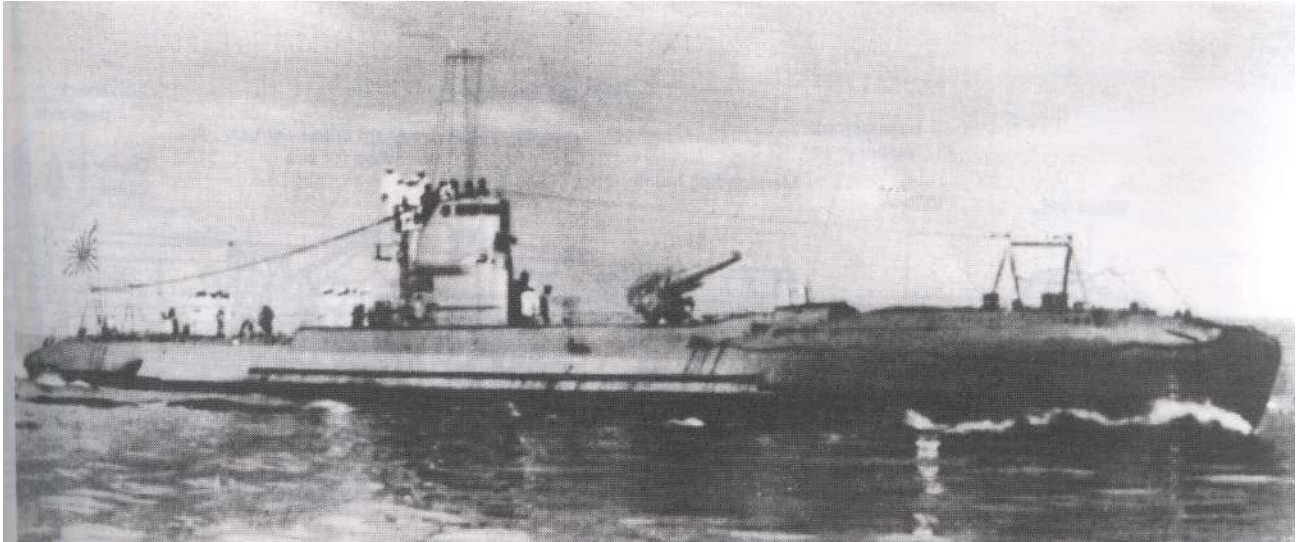
Group portrait of the ship's company of Deloraine. (AWM 305324)

Earlier the same day a Japanese submarine had been detected and attacked by the American destroyer USS *Edsall*, but it was not known if she had succeeded in inflicting damage. It was hoped *Deloraine* would regain contact on the given course. At 13:35 a torpedo was seen approaching, the ship swung sharply and it passed ten feet astern.

Immediately a good echo contact was obtained and within a matter of minutes the minesweeper dropped a pattern of six depth charges. Large patches of oil and great air bubbles burst to the surface.

Finally 1-124 surfaced almost alongside the *Deloraine*, its conning tower visible. 1-124 was an older class of submarine but she was 383 tons and 279 feet in length and equipped with 5.5 inch forward gun. The *Deloraine* was about half her size, 650 tons and 186 feet in length and only very lightly equipped with fire power in comparison. Fortunately for the *Deloraine* the 1-124 promptly dived.

Deloraine launched a depth charge and a circling US aircraft dropped a small bomb, both close to the submarine. Eventually I-124 was confirmed to be motionless on the ocean bed, sealing the fate of its captain, Lt Commander Kochi Kishigami, and his division commander, Capt. Tako Endo, and their 80 crew. The attack continued and after *Deloraine* had expended all of her charges, she was joined by her two sister ships HMAS *Katoomba* and HMAS *Lithgow*, before departing to reload with depth charges from HMAS *Vigilant*.



Japanese Submarine I-124



Artist Phil Belbin's fine impression of Deloraine pressing home her attack on the I-124. (Naval Heritage Collection)

Returning to re-join *Katoomba* in the early hours of the following morning, *Deloraine* obtained a second contact and dropped a further series of charges over the position. Post war investigation of Japanese records showed that the first attack had been successful, and *Deloraine*, *Katoomba*, *Lithgow* and *Edsall* were officially credited with destroying the Japanese submarine I-124.

A vessel of 1,142 tons, she was one of the only four minelaying submarines in the Japanese Navy and loaded forty-two mines and twelve torpedoes. I-124 was the first enemy submarine sunk in Australian waters. On 28 June 1977 the Minister for Administrative Services signed a declaration under the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976, establishing the remains of I-124 as an historic shipwreck.

In February 1942 *Deloraine* began a period of escort and anti-submarine duty between Darwin and Thursday Island, which lasted until June. She was berthed in Darwin Harbour when the first Japanese air raid took place on 19 February 1942. Fortunately she suffered no damage and was able to render valuable assistance with rescue operations.



Left: Dense clouds smoke rise from oil tanks hit during the Japanese air raid on Australia's mainland. In the foreground is HMAS Deloraine, which escaped damage, Darwin, NT, circa 19 February 1942. (AWM 128108) Right: Seen from the drydock, fire breaks out aboard the American transport Mauna Loa, hit during the Japanese air raid. Deloraine is at the centre left, Darwin, NT, circa 19 February 1942.

On 5 March, on anti-submarine patrol off Darwin, she was attacked three times by a Japanese four-engined flying boat, but again emerged unscathed. In July 1942 *Deloraine* returned to Sydney to begin convoy escort duties on the east coast and to forward areas.

The midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour was a recent event, and three ships had been sunk off New South Wales the previous month. For the next twenty months, except for brief periods in dockyard hands, the ship was in constant service protecting the coastal shipping moving between Sydney, Newcastle, Brisbane and New Guinea.

In April 1943 she rescued nineteen survivors of the torpedoed United States merchant ship *Lydia M Child*. Of the many hundreds of ships safely shepherded into port only two were lost in convoy. Both were torpedoed off the New South Wales coast on 16 June 1943 – the United States merchant ship *Portmar* and the landing ship LST 469.

In May 1944 *Deloraine* took up station in the New Guinea area for escort, patrol and troop carrying duties, including support of the operations at Noemfoor, Biak and Morotai.



POTSDAM, NEW GUINEA. 1944-08-20. THE RAN CORVETTE HMAS DELORAINE (FRONT) PASSING THE CORVETTE HMAS COLAC AS SHE PULLS INTO THE HARBOUR LOADED WITH TROOPS OF THE 25TH INFANTRY BATTALION.

In February 1945 she carried out bombardments of Japanese positions on Bass and Penguin Islands in the Mapia group. Further assaults on enemy shore posts followed in April against Muschu and Kairiru Islands and Wewak on the New Guinea mainland.

On the last day of April 1945 she sailed from Langemak for Brisbane to be refitted. Hostilities ended before the work was completed.



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



*Crew members of Deloraine celebrate the end of the Second World War, circa August 1945.
(AWM P08424.029)*

In September 1945 *Deloraine* proceeded to Morotai where she embarked troops for the occupation of Menado in the Celebes, returning to Australia in November after visiting Labuan and Sandakan Harbour. The end of the year found her sweeping on the New South Wales coast.



Left: Informal portrait of officers of Deloraine, circa 1945. (AWM P08424.026) Right: Group portrait of officers around the time the ship was initially paid off, circa November 1946. Back row, L-R: Surgeon Lieutenant Colin Graham Alderman, Sub Lieutenant Peter James Hutson, Sub Lieutenant Paul Merrick (Mick) Dexter and Sub Lieutenant James Victor (Jim) Morley. Seated: First Lieutenant Williams. (AWM P08424.028)

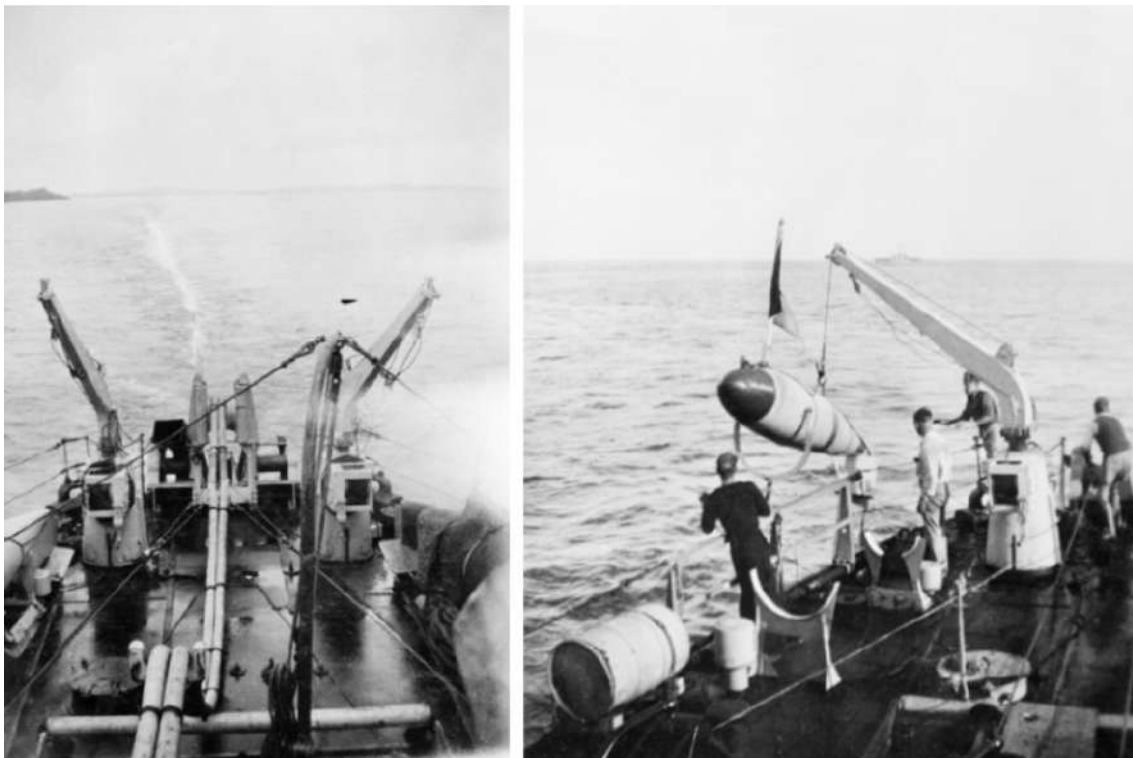


Crew of Deloraine dressed ship at Refuge Bay, Wilsons Promontory, prior to Devonport visit.

After the end of WWII, corvettes visited as close to their named town as possible, and Devonport was the closest port to Deloraine. The crew of HMAS *Deloraine* took residents of Deloraine and others from Devonport for a trip in Bass Strait. HMAS *Deloraine* shut down for a week, the residents of Devonport received an extra petrol ration and the crew was feted. Activities included cricket, horse-riding, penny farthing cycling, sight-seeing and a dance.



Sailors from Deloraine watch Sub Lieutenant James Victor (Jim) Morley demonstrating his horse riding skills during the ship's visit to Devonport, circa January 1946. HMAS Deloraine shut down for a week, the residents of Devonport received an extra petrol ration and the crew was feted. Activities included cricket, horse-riding, penny farthing cycling, sight-seeing and a dance. (Lieutenant Paul Merrick (Mick) Dexter Collection,AWM P08424.012)



Left: Deloraine participating in an LL magnetic minesweeping operations near Kavieng, circa 1946. (AWM P08424.016) Right: Crew members on Deloraine recovering an Orepesa minesweeping float (paravane) from Bass Strait. In 1946, Deloraine was sent to the Rabaul and Kavieng areas to clear moored mines and magnetic mine fields. (AWM P08424.015)

In 1946 the ship was employed on minesweeping operations in the New Britain area as a unit of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla, returning to Sydney on 13 July.



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

The ship paid off into E Class Reserve at Sydney on 4 November 1946. On 16 December 1946 *Deloraine* recommissioned at Sydney as a unit of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla.

The Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton) Thu 5 Mar 1947:

DISSATISFACTION ABOARD MINESWEEPER

MELBOURNE, March 5, HMAS *Deloraine* which has been minesweeping off the Barrier Reef, is returning to Sydney because of dissatisfaction among members of the crew. The Navy Department, which announced that the ship was returning, would not comment on reports that dissatisfaction amounted to mutiny. Some dissatisfaction with service conditions arose recently on board HMAS *Deloraine*, of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla. It was stated that the ship has been engaged in minesweeping operations off the Barrier Reef, but is now proceeding to Sydney where a thorough inquiry will be made by the Flag Officer commanding the Australian Squadron (Rear-Admiral N. B. Farncombe).

The *Deloraine* will arrive in Sydney late this week. The 20th Minesweeping Flotilla comprises six ships. A Sydney report states that the order for the ship to return was issued after an exchange of signals between the Naval Board and the commander of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla (Captain R. V. Wheatley).

The Sun (Sydney) Mon 17 Apr 1947:**Navy Reprimands Officer for Remarks to Ratings**

A naval court-martial held aboard HMAS Hobart today severely reprimanded Lieut. William Behrens Simms for remarks to ratings during a disturbance when HMAS *Deloraine* was at Townsville last month

One witness said that Simms, when surrounded by six men making threatening gestures, said, "There is not a man among you who has the guts to strike me."

The court-martial found two charges against Simms proved. Simms, now attached to HMAS Penguin, was charged with committing an act to the prejudice of good order and against all naval discipline in that he engaged in an altercation with three ratings on February 22 and 23.

He was further charged with having on February 23, used to the ratings of the *Deloraine* provoking speeches, tending to make a disturbance.

The *Deloraine* left Sydney on January 14th with the 20th mine sweeper Flotilla to operate off the Barrier Reef.

3 Ratings Drunk

In a statement read by Lieutenant-Commander Graham, Deputy Judge Advocate, it was alleged that while the *Deloraine* was at Townsville on February 23, three drunken ratings on the wharf began to abuse the ship and the officer of the watch. Simms ordered the arrest of the men. Bates, Myers, and Swain, who, when they came aboard, made insulting remarks. Later, it was alleged, about 60 other men came on deck, and some of them hurled abusive remarks at Simms.

The position got out of hand, and the lower deck was ordered to be cleared. Sub-Lieutenant Harrington said that when Simms told Bates to put his cap straight. Bates replied in filthy terms. Harrington added that at one stage Simms was surrounded by six men who were making threatening gestures. Simms said: "There is not a man among you who has the guts to strike me," added Harrington

Stoker Petty-Officer Waller said that when menaced by the men. Simms said: "There are 60 odd men here, and I don't think any of you have the guts to strike me, or carry out your threats." "The men then attempted to strike the first-lieutenant." Said Waller.

Sent To Bed

"The captain came and sent Simms below," said Waller. He addressed the crew in a quiet manner, and told them If they had any complaints he would deal with them in the morning. He told the men to "get their heads down" (go to bed), and the men did as ordered. Engine-room Artificer Roberts said that during the disturbance Simms said to a rating: "Take your cap and shirt off and I will have you now."

In defence. Simms said that his remarks did not constitute an entry into an altercation, and did not tend to create a disturbance, as a disturbance had already been created.

His actions, he said, were a sincere attempt to get out of a difficult situation, which had developed because of the action of a rating and his companions.

To announce the court-martial, a gun was fired at 8 am and while the court-martial was session a Union Jack was flown from the main mast of the Hobart. As soon as the court martial had ended, the Union Jack was lowered.

The Herald (Melbourne) Tues 18 1947:

CENSURED OFFICER RE-DRAFTED

CANBERRA. Tuesday. — Lieutenant. William Behrens Simms RAN (temporary service), who was found guilty by a court martial and severely reprimanded for having engaged in an altercation with three ratings in the minesweeper HMAS *Deloraine* had been drafted to another ship, said the Minister for the Navy (Mr Riordan) today.

Ratings had been dealt with for their part in the disturbance by more usual methods of enforcing naval discipline.

Deloraine remained on active seagoing service assisting in the post war mine clearance programme until January 1948, when she arrived at Fremantle to pay off. She had then steamed some 166,000 miles of which 129,000 miles were steamed on active service in World War Two.



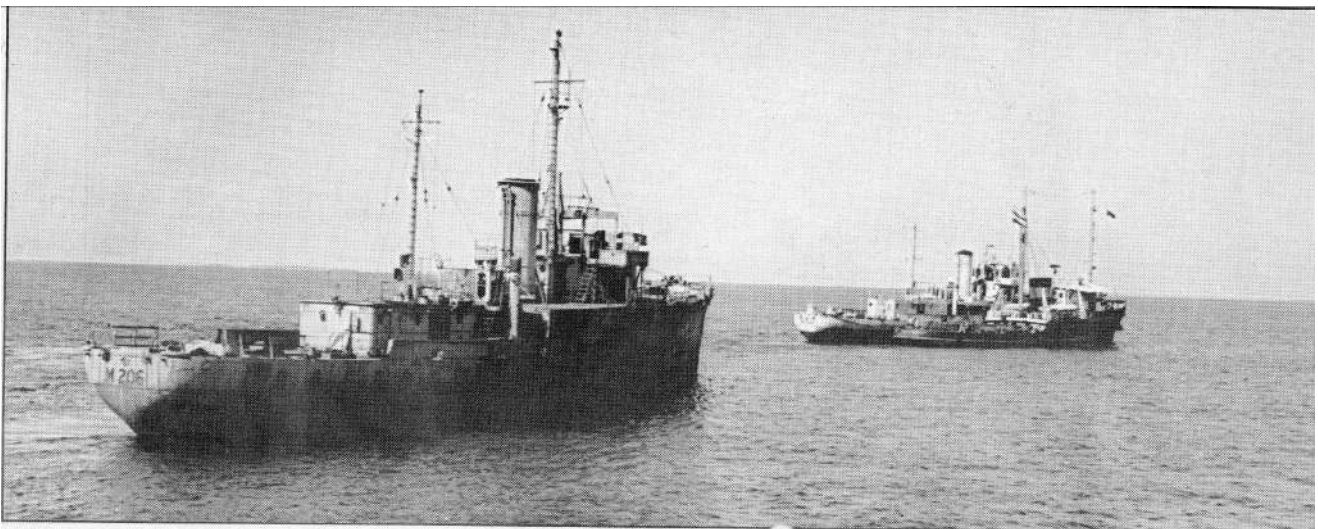
HMAS Deloraine at Rockingham Jetty 1948



HMAS Deloraine at Rockingham Jetty 1948

Deloraine paid off into Reserve at Fremantle on 30 June 1948.

She was sold to the Delta Shipping Co Ltd, Hong Kong, on 8 August 1956 for breaking up. 9 Jan 1957, the ship departed Fremantle along with HMAS *Lithgow*, towed by the tug *Loire*. Arrived Hong Kong 1 Feb 1957 and broken up.



Long tow for Deloraine and Lithgow (close) begins. Neg: Navy T8395.

