

HMAS Goulburn – J167/ B243/ A117



Namesake: City of Goulburn, NSW
Builder: Cockatoo Island
Dockyard
Laid down: 10 July 1940
Launched: 16 November 1940
Commissioned: 28 February 1941
Decommissioned: 27 September 1946

Battle honours
 Pacific 1942–44
 New Guinea 1942–44

Fate:
 Sold for scrap in 1947



Displacement: 743 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

Speed: 2 shafts, 1,750 hp
 15 knots (28 km/h;
 17 mph) at 1,750 hp

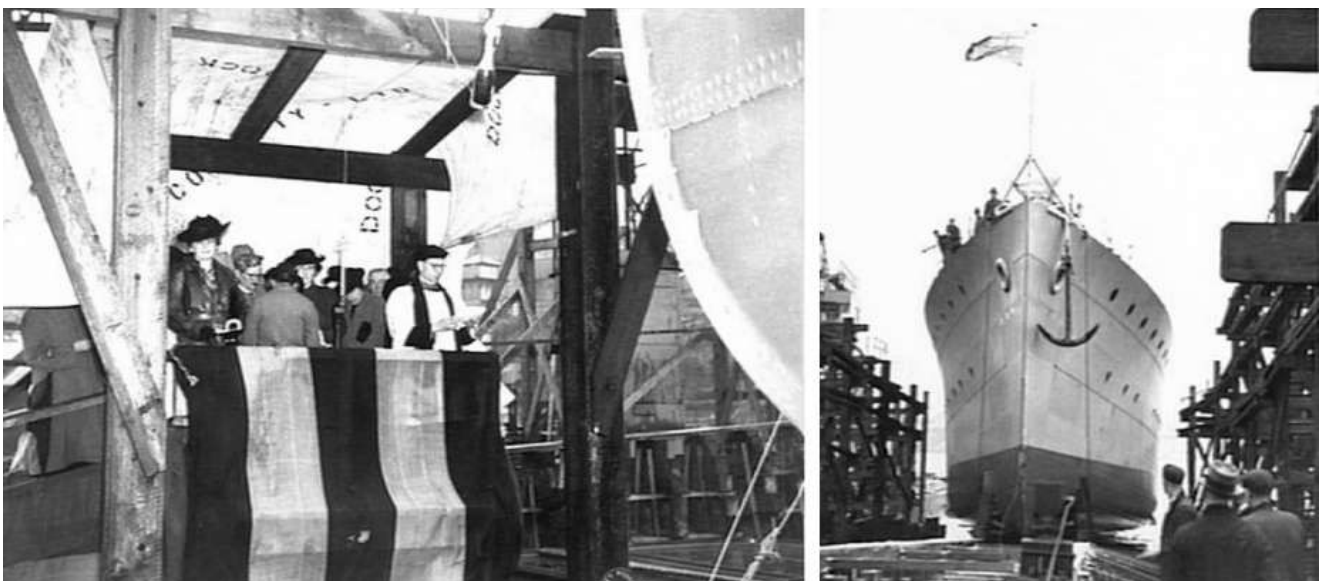
Complement: 85
Armament: 1 × 4-inch gun,
 3 × Oerlikons,
 2 × Lewis 303
 2 × Vickers 303
 Depth charges

chutes
 and throwers

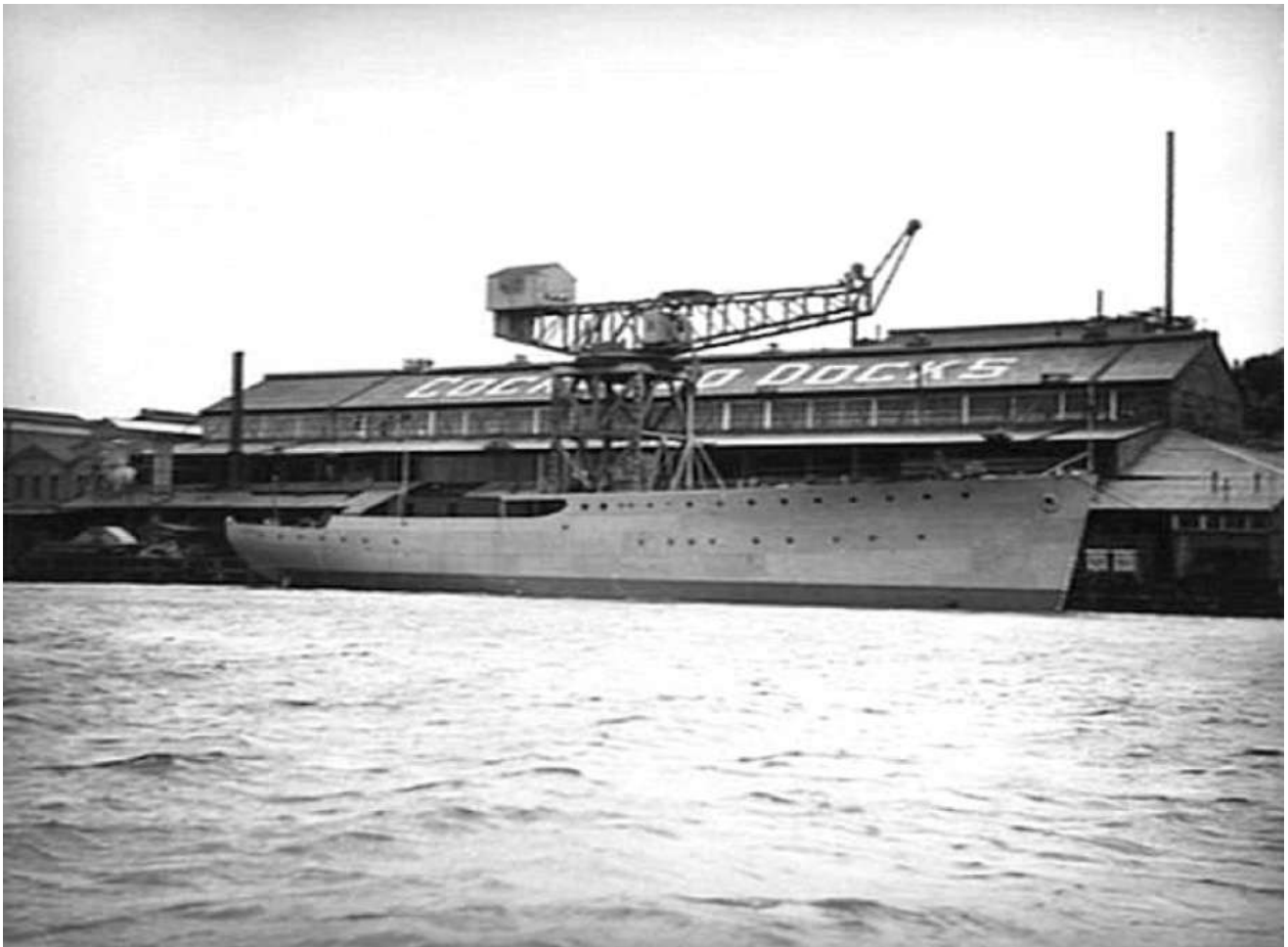
Ordered for the British Admiralty and commissioned by RAN, HMAS *Goulburn* was laid down at Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney, NSW on 10 July 1940. She was launched on 16 November 1940 by Mrs Crace, wife of Rear Admiral Commanding Australian Squadron, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the regional city in the Southern Tablelands in NSW.



Stern view of Goulburn before the launching ceremony. (AWM 004282)



The final blessing by a chaplain before Goulburn takes to the water for the first time.



Following her launching Goulburn was secured alongside to begin fitting out.

Goulburn commissioned at Sydney on 28 February 1941 under the command of Lieutenant Basil Paul RANR(S).





HMAS Goulburn on Trials

Following a period of working up exercises in the waters off New South Wales, *Goulburn* joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla in Bass Strait on 23 April 1941. She operated as a sweeper with the Flotilla until 31 May 1941 and was engaged in clearing sweeps in Bass Strait and off the New South Wales coast, where minefields had been laid by the German auxiliary cruiser *Penguin* and her auxiliary minelayer *Passat*. *Goulburn* swept one mine.

On 16 June 1941 *Goulburn*, in company with her sister ship HMAS *Burnie*, sailed from Sydney for Singapore where both ships became attached to the China Station. At Singapore in November 1941, with HMA ships *Bendigo*, *Burnie* and *Maryborough*, she formed the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla.

Following the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, *Goulburn* was engaged on escort, patrol and minesweeping duties, from Singapore down to Sunda Strait, until the end of January 1942.

On 11 December 1941 *Goulburn* intercepted and boarded the Japanese fish carrier KOFUKU MARU off Malaya. The boarding party, in a journey in which they were outnumbered 4 to 1 by the Japanese crew, successfully delivered their prize to our forces at Singapore.

KOFUKU MARU, renamed KRAIT, operated by the Services Reconnaissance Department and crewed by RAN, later achieved fame for its audacious and successful raid on Japanese shipping at Singapore.

Arriving at Batavia on 30 January 1942. *Goulburn* remained in the harbour until 5 February when she proceeded on an anti-submarine patrol of Batavia Roads, a duty she maintained until 8 February. On this day *Goulburn* proceeded with *Burnie* to escort two merchant ships bound for Colombo. The crew of one of these, the SS *Kumsang*, refused to sail. The Commodore Commanding China Force therefore ordered the movement to be made escorting the remaining ship, the SS *Harpasa*. At 12:00 the following day *Goulburn* and *Burnie* parted company from the *Harpasa* in position 8°26'S, 101°31'E, in the Indian Ocean, and returned through Sunda Strait.

On 12 February *Goulburn* arrived at Oosthaven in Sumatra and remained outside the anchorage as the anti-submarine screen for the next few days. On 17 February she stood by during demolition operations at Oosthaven before parting company from *Burnie* and proceeding to Ratai Bay to escort the Dutch ships *Both*, *Stage*, *Marilyse Moller* and *Balikpapan*. *Goulburn* and convoy, plus the SS *Van Outhoorn*, steamed south into the Indian Ocean unmolested. At 19:40 on 18 February the convoy was ordered to disperse and proceed independently. *Goulburn* set course for Tjilitjap where she arrived during the afternoon of 19 February. She remained at Tjilitjap during 20 and 21 February and left for Batavia the following day.

Passing through Sunda Strait on 23 February, *Goulburn* reached Batavia without incident the following morning. On the afternoon of 24 February she sailed with HMAS *Toowoomba* to carry out sweeps at the entrance to Sunda Strait. This operation was completed after some delay due to the presence of shadowing enemy aircraft. Returning to Batavia on 25 February, *Goulburn* remained in the harbour until 27 February, when she left to join the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla on the Sunda Strait patrol. She passed HMAS *Hobart* en route in company with other cruisers and observed the formation being attacked by Japanese dive bombers. *Goulburn* re-joined the flotilla off Merak. Shortly afterwards attacks developed from dive bombers operating in three waves of three planes at twenty minute intervals. No damage resulted.

On 28 February the Sunda Strait patrol was discontinued and the whole flotilla moved towards Tjilitjap. Arriving the following morning, *Goulburn* left almost immediately for Australia. Except for being sighted and shadowed by a Japanese bomber, she saw no sign of the enemy. *Goulburn* reached Fremantle during the afternoon of 9 March with only seven tons of fuel to spare.

On her return to Australia *Goulburn* was assigned to convoy escort duty on the east Australian coast, mainly between Brisbane and Gladstone. In March 1944, following a long refit which kept her in dockyard hands for almost three months, she proceeded to New Guinea waters where she was engaged on escort and patrol duties.

In June 1944 *Goulburn* assisted the landings at Dugumu Bay and on Sogari Island in New Guinea. Between July and September 1944 she was engaged on general escort duty in New Guinea waters, broken by a brief visit to Cairns for docking.

On 25 September 1944 she embarked eight native scouts and one United States Army intelligence officer (Major Ames) at Bosnik and proceeded to the Mapia Islands where the native scouts were disembarked at a position to the southward of Bras Island. The primary object of this operation was to endeavour to find out the strength and disposition of the Japanese remaining in the Mapia Island group.



Plans had previously been made to re-embark the native scouts two days later, and on 29 September *Goulburn* arrived at the arranged rendezvous off Finaldo Island. A close inshore search was carried out for the native scouts but they were not sighted and the search was continued to Bras and Pegun Islands. These islands were circled twice and as there was still no sign of the scouts, Major Ames decided to land on Bras Island and carry out a reconnaissance.

Together with an armed party of six ratings from the crew of *Goulburn*, Major Ames made a landing using the ship's whaler. Prior to the landing the entire area was shelled and strafed by *Goulburn*. The landing party returned to the ship about an hour later, without having contacted any natives or Japanese, although there were signs that the area had recently been occupied. *Goulburn* then set a course for Pegun Island but on arrival the sea and weather conditions were very unfavourable and it was impossible to make a further landing on this island. A village on Pegun Island, which was thought to contain Japanese, was shelled before *Goulburn* left the area and proceeded to Biak.

No fire was returned from the shore during any part of this operation, nor were any Japanese seen, and as the native scouts did not return it was thought that they had been captured. This was confirmed a few days later when American PT Boats attempted to land an armed party on Pegun Island and encountered considerable opposition from the Japanese garrison.

On another occasion *Goulburn* embarked a number of Netherlands Indies Civilian Administration officers and officers from the Allied Intelligence Bureau at Noemfoor, and sailed for Little Geelvink Bay to endeavour to pick up a Netherlands Army officer and native scouts who had been carrying out reconnaissance of the Japanese internment camps in the vicinity of the Praft River for a week or more.

The vessel arrived at the rendezvous position near Warikau on 3 October and carried out a close inshore patrol in Little Geelvink Bay. As no contact occurred with the patrol, a course was set for Mois Aeri Island, situated about nine miles north of Manokwari, in the hope of picking up the NICA scouts there.

When the ship arrived off Mois Aeri a party of *Goulburn* ratings and NICA officers made a landing on the island, once again using the ship's whaler. After traversing a section of the island a contact was made with the native scouts and just as the whaler commenced to return to *Goulburn*, a party of three Japanese soldiers were sighted endeavouring to make an escape to the mainland in a native canoe.

The crew of *Goulburn*'s whaler immediately gave chase and as the Japanese, in the lighter craft, were commencing to gain ground LS Maher, the coxswain of the whaler, fired a burst of machine gun fire, wounding one of them in the hand.

This was sufficient to convince them that escape was impossible and all three, possibly through fright, fell from their canoe and commenced to swim around, but not towards *Goulburn*'s whaler. The endeavours to persuade the Japanese to enter the whaler were amusing and after coaxing had failed to induce them to swim towards the whaler, two were manhandled into the boat and the other then decided to swim over to it.



HMAS Goulburn operated as a minesweeper, convoy escort and anti-submarine patrol ship during her 5 year commission.

While *Goulburn* was cruising off the island, waiting to recover the whaler, large numbers of Japanese were observed on the mainland. The NICA scouts who had just been recovered from Mois Aeri reported that there were about 200 Japanese in this camp and the Japanese prisoners were then made to point out the key position in the camp. The area was then shelled and strafed by *Goulburn*. On completion of the bombardment *Goulburn* proceeded to Noemfoor.

From Noemfoor she proceeded to B-Van Seroei Harbour, Japen Island, where she arrived on 4 October 1944, and after a short stay in the harbour proceeded to Jamakaan on Rioemberpon Island to pick up 150 Javanese soldiers who had escaped from Japanese labour gangs and concentration camps in the Manokwari area. Despite the fact that there were estimated to be over 1,000 Japanese on the mainland opposite Rioemberpon Island, no opposition was encountered and the embarkation of the Javanese soldiers was without incident.

Following these operations *Goulburn* was busy until December 1944 escorting convoys between Biak, Morotai and Madang, before returning to Australia.

Goulburn spent the first four months of 1945 in home waters. She returned to New Guinea early in May 1945, where she was engaged in anti-submarine and sweeping duties at Manus until June.

On 14 June 1945 she arrived in Darwin to act as escort to tugs towing a floating dock from Darwin to Milne Bay. This mission completed, *Goulburn* returned to Manus and from there on 23 July 1945, she proceeded for Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands to act as part escort of a convoy to Manus

On 15 August 1945 *Goulburn* was at Manus. On 30 August she sailed for Hong Kong in company of her sister ships *Bendigo* and *Whyalla*, forming escort to a seven ship slow convoy. Proceeding via Morotai and the Philippines, they reached Hong Kong on 21 September. *Goulburn* then joined the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla for sweeps in Chinese waters.

These operations were completed early in November and on 16 November the flotilla, consisting of HMA ships *Ballarat*, *Bathurst*, *Burnie*, *Maryborough*, *Cairns*, *Fremantle*, *Bendigo*, *Toowoomba* and *Goulburn*, proceeded for Australia. *Goulburn* arrived in Sydney in December 1945, bringing her naval seagoing career to a close, having steamed some 165,000 miles.

Goulburn paid off on 27 September 1946. 13 Oct 1947 she was sold as a seagoing vessel to Captain SP Bell, of Pacific Enterprise Incorporated, for £12,500. She was later resold to PJ Lobo & Co, Hong Kong, for £15,000, and again in December 1950 to A H Carrol, acting as agent for Ta Hing Co (Hong Kong) Ltd, in December 1950. However, a Commonwealth Statutory Order issued in January 1951 barred her removal from Australian waters.

Goulburn was resold in 1953 to John Manners & Co (Aust) Pty Ltd, of Sydney, in 1953 and renamed *Benita*.





Goulburn B243 tied up in Watsons Bay, Sydney with other Corvettes to be paid off



Benita ex-Goulburn laid up in Sydney



Broken up in Iron Cove, Sydney starting in November 1953

Goulburn Evening Post (NSW) Fri 14 Oct 1949:

HMAS *Goulburn*

The presentation of the bell of HMAS *Goulburn* to the city last night by the Minister for Defence, Mr. Riordan, marks the close of an incident of which the citizens have every reason to be proud. The *Goulburn*, as a ship, may not have figured in any outstanding engagement but her record was a continuous one which amounted in the end to a splendid achievement. It was suggested to the citizens through the council when the *Goulburn* put out to sea that they should sponsor the ship and *Goulburn* people responded magnificently. There were more than formal greetings and, in one way or another, some thousands of pounds were raised to buy comforts for the men, a plaque for the ship, which is now in the City Council and will take its honoured place on the walls of the chamber, a coffee service, radio and so on. It was more than a formal association for there were visits to the ship by the mayor and aldermen of the day and visits to the city by the officers and men of the ship. It was a personal association which might have been even closer but for the supposedly useful curtain of silence insisted upon the movements of ships and the men in them, even though the ships were only 900-tonners. The idea of securing the bell originated in the council and a letter went from that body to the Navy Department, making the suggestion. The reply came that the council could have the bell and the price would be £5. The cold, official attitude may have been technically right but like the official attitude on many other occasions and in many other ways, it was sentimentally wrong.

"Autre temps, autre moe urs" as the French aptly put it other days, other ways. Rebuffed, the council, in the light of all the things the citizens had done for the ship and the men, dropped the matter. The next thing was a notification that the bell would be presented to the council. As the Minister for the Navy remarked, in chatting with one of the aldermen last night, he told the Prime Minister that to put a price on the bell, in such circumstances, would be "just too silly." So the bell, which, with its ship, had rung the watches in almost every sea and over many thousands of miles, in quiet times and tense times, in days of cheerful sunshine and in days' of nature's and man's anger, has come to *Goulburn*, a reminder of those days of sacrifice by the men of the ship and of spontaneous good-heartedness on the part of the citizens. It is a symbol of the best that is in mankind, of service unto death, if need be, and of goodness and a close affection shown by the people at home for those who were offering that splendid service. It is a symbol of which *Goulburn* can always be proud and will not least among those precious things that give our city its own particular distinction and tradition.

