

HMAS *Latrobe* – J234/M234



Namesake: Town of Latrobe, Tas
Builder: Mort's Dock
Laid down: 27 January 1942
Launched: Floated 19 June 1942
Commissioned: 6 November 1942
Decommissioned: 13 March 1953
Reclassified: Training ship (1946)
Battle honours:
 Darwin 1943
 Pacific 1943–45
 New Guinea 1943–44
 Borneo 1945

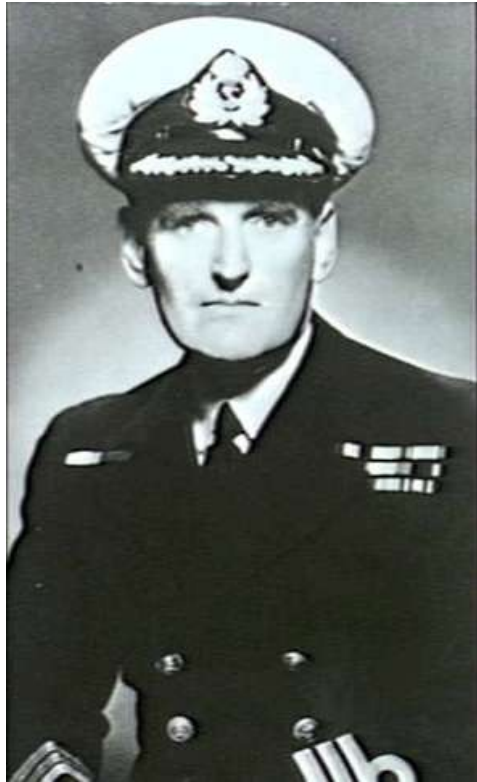
Fate:
Sold for scrap, 18 May 1956



Displacement: 650 tons (standard),
1,025 tons (full war load)
Length: 180 ft 10 in (55.12 m)
Beam: 31 ft 2 in (9.50 m)
Draught: 8 ft 6 in (2.59 m)
Propulsion: triple expansion
engine, 2 shafts
Speed: 15.5 knots (28.7 km/h;
17.8 mph) at 2,000 hp
Complement: 85
Armament: 1 × 4-inch gun,
3 × Oerlikons

HMAS *Latrobe* was laid down at Mort's Dock and Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney, on 27 January 1942. The vessel was not traditionally launched but floated in the dry dock in which she was built. This occasion was marked with a low key ceremony comprising a blessing by the Reverend AG Rix on 19 June 1942.

Latrobe commissioned at Sydney on 6 November 1942 under the command of Lieutenant Commander Basil T Brewster DSC RN.



Latrobe and her sister corvettes performed a broad range of tasks during their wartime service, earning them a reputation as 'Maids of all Work'.



Informal group portrait of men on deck of Latrobe, shortly after her commissioning in the first quarter of 1943. This was her first voyage into tropical waters and most of this group, mainly stokers, have shaved heads, partly to counteract the heat of the engine room. L-R: Back row: all unidentified. Third row: Seaman Les Bates, unidentified, Stoker L Ward, Stoker EC Van Bael, unidentified. Second row: Stoker K Akers, Stoker TB McGuinness, unidentified, unidentified, Stoker GJ Furey. Front row: Stoker JR Newton, Stoker D Peers, Stoker Bishop, unidentified, Leading Telegraphist Stan Nalder, Stoker N Ulrich, Stoker Don Morgan. (AWM P02493.005)

Latrobe commenced her wartime career in January 1943 escorting convoys to New Guinea. After several trips she passed to the operational control of the Darwin Command on 25 February and arrived there to begin duty escorting a convoy from Thursday Island on 10 March 1943. She remained in northern Australian waters shepherding convoys between Darwin and Thursday Island until June 1944 when she proceeded to New Guinea waters.

It was a period of routine escort duty, though on many occasions her crew were reminded of the enemy's presence. On 12 February she unsuccessfully attacked a Japanese submarine. In July en route to Darwin her convoy was twice attacked by enemy aircraft. Again in December 1943 she was attacked by a single Japanese bomber. Raids were also experienced in Darwin Harbour.



1944 Capt. D Logan

On 17 June 1944 *Latrobe* arrived at Port Moresby to begin operating in the New Guinea area. The following seven months were spent escorting convoys to Madang, Hollandia, Morotai, Biak, Noemfoor and Mios Woendi. Considerable periods were spent on anti-submarine patrol mainly in the Morotai and Biak areas.

Returning to the mainland in January 1945, *Latrobe* spent seven weeks in refit in Adelaide, proceeding to Sydney at the end of March 1945.



1945 at Ambon preparing to disembark the 33 Brigade

On 23 April 1945 she arrived at Langemak to begin a second tour of duty in the New Guinea area. In May she spent nine days operating as an anti-submarine unit off Tarakan, Borneo, followed by similar duties at Morotai. In July and August she returned to Borneo for a period as the duty minesweeper off Balikpapan, carrying out a bombardment of the Japanese held village of Separtim on 3 August.



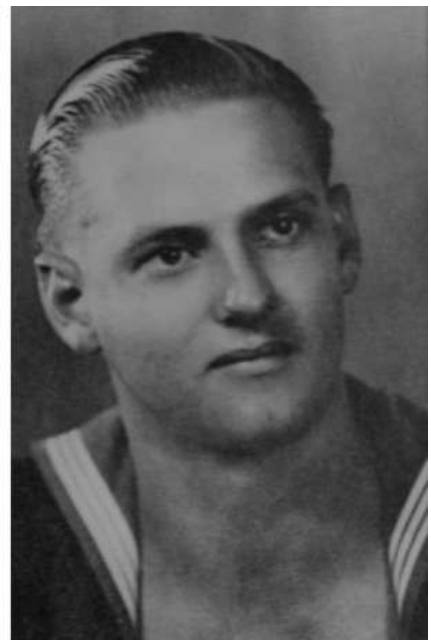
Left: Three Australian sailors from Latrobe, L-R: Engine Room Artificer Eric Smith, unidentified, Stoker JG Willis, on a road at a local market in Sandakan, circa October 1945. (AWM P02493.001). Right: Able Seaman Brian Kane with Latrobe's unofficial mascot 'George', a crocodile carved by Torres Strait Islanders.

In September 1945 *Latrobe* operated between Morotai and the Celebes, evacuating Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees.



POWs on deck

In October she transported occupation forces to Menado and Sandakan, returning to Sydney in December from Labuan, Borneo, with two small craft in tow.



Left: Latrobe fitted with A286 Air/Surface warning radar aerial and A272 Surface Warning Radar. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria). Right: Studio portrait of B3391 Signalman Thomas E Davies, circa 1942. Davies served on Latrobe 1942 to 1946. (AWM P02493.004)

When hostilities ended on 15 August the ship was anchored at Morotai. On 19 December 1945 she reached Melbourne having steamed 92,819 miles and spent some 10,000 hours underway since commissioning.

In January 1946 she visited her town of *Latrobe* in Tasmania and shortly afterwards assumed the role of training ship attached to Flinders Naval Depot, a duty which kept her occupied until the close of 1952.



1947 at Naval Dockyard, Williamstown



1949 Latrobe Melbourne



1949 Latrobe Melbourne



Latrobe was assigned two pennant numbers during her commission – J234 (left) and M234 as a training ship.



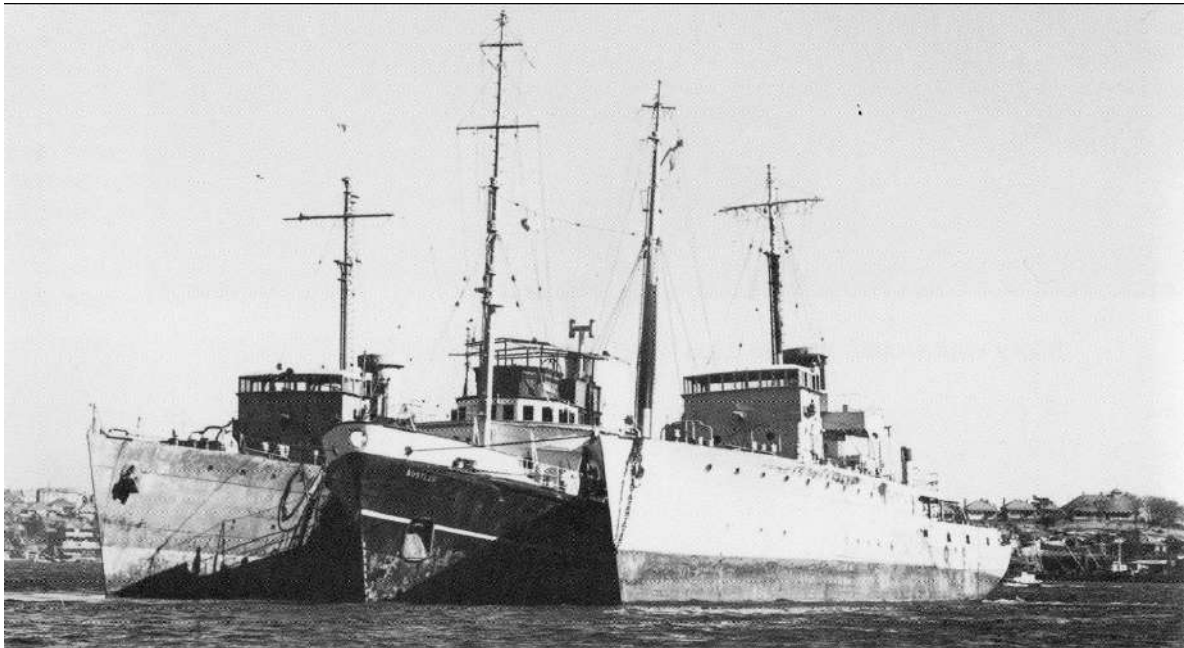
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Latrobe paid off on 13 March 1953 and was transferred into the control of Williamstown Dockyard, then passing into the Reserve Fleet on 17 September 1953.

In her ten years of seagoing service *Latrobe* steamed 155,293 miles and spent more than 17,000 hours underway. She was sold on 18 May 1956 to Hong Kong Rolling Mills to be broken up. 5 July 1956 Departed Williamstown along with *Bowen*, towed by tug *Bustler*. Broken up Hong Kong.



L to R *Bowen*, tug *Bustler*, *Latrobe*

