

HMAS *Mildura* – J207/M207



Namesake: City of Mildura, Vic
Builder: Morts Dock in Sydney
Laid down: 23 September 1940
Launched: 15 March 1941
Commissioned: 23 July 1941
Decommissioned: 21 May 1948
Recommissioned: 20 February 1951
Motto: Look Ahead
Reclassified: Training ship (1951–1953)
 Immobilised training hulk (1954–1965)
Decommissioned: 11 September 1953

Battle honours:
 Pacific 1941–45
 New Guinea 1943–44

Fate:
 The ship was sold for scrap to Brisbane Non-Ferrous on 8 September 1965.



Displacement: 650 tons (standard), 1,025 tons (full war load)
Length: 186 ft (57 m)
Beam: 31 ft (9.4 m)
Draught: 8 ft 6 in (2.59 m)
Propulsion: 1 × triple expansion engine, 1,750 hp
Speed: 15 knots (28 km/h; 17 mph)
Complement: 85
Armament: 1 × QF 4-inch gun
 3 × 20 mm Oerlikon (later 2)
 1 × Bofors 40 mm gun (installed later)
 Machine guns
 Depth charges
 chutes and throwers

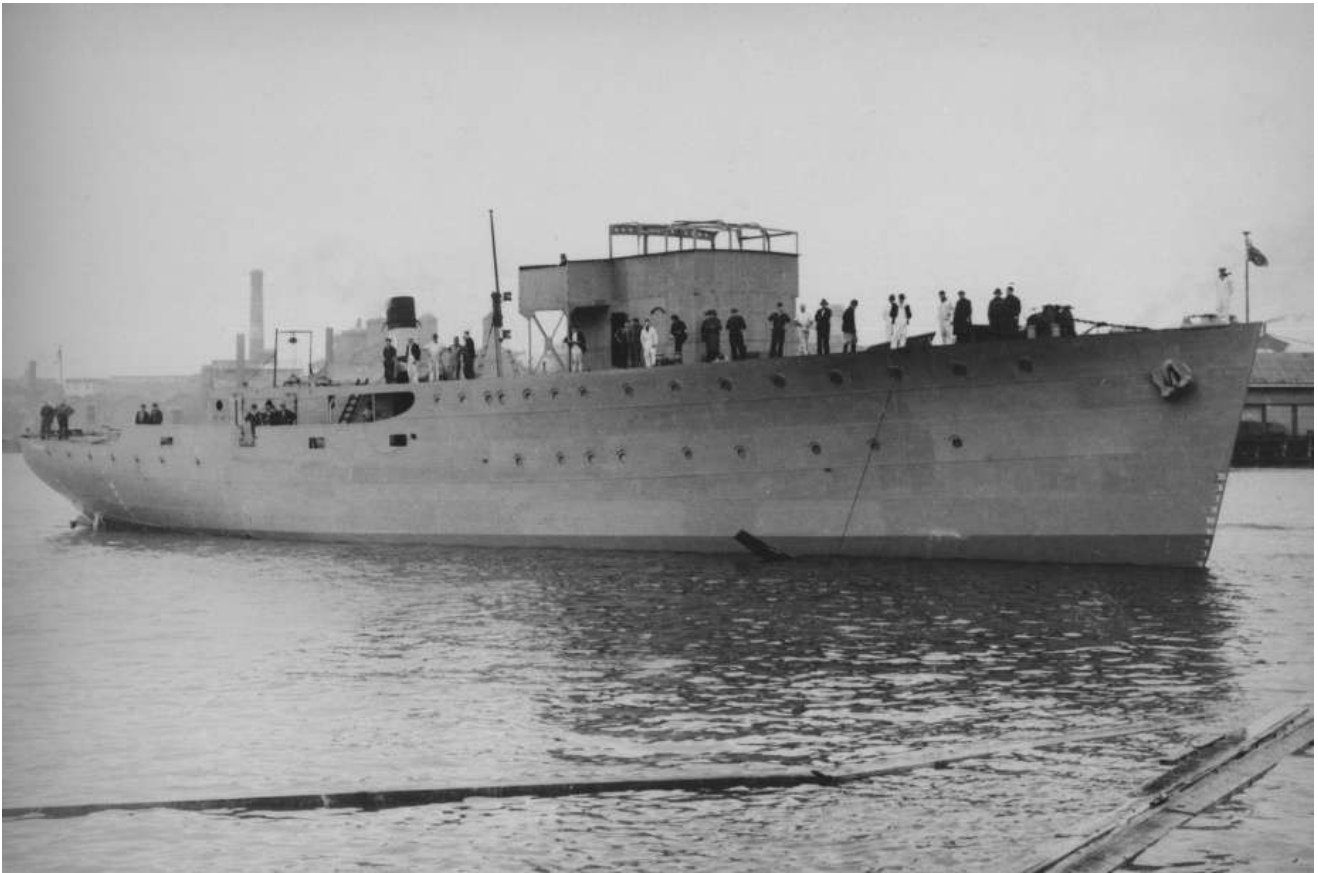
HMAS *Mildura* was laid down at Mort's Dock Engineering Company, Balmain, Sydney, NSW on 23 September 1940. She was floated out on 15 March 1941 by Mrs J (Marie) Durnford, wife of the Second Naval Member and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the north west Victorian regional city. By the war's end Mort's Dock had constructed fourteen of the sixty Bathurst Class corvettes.



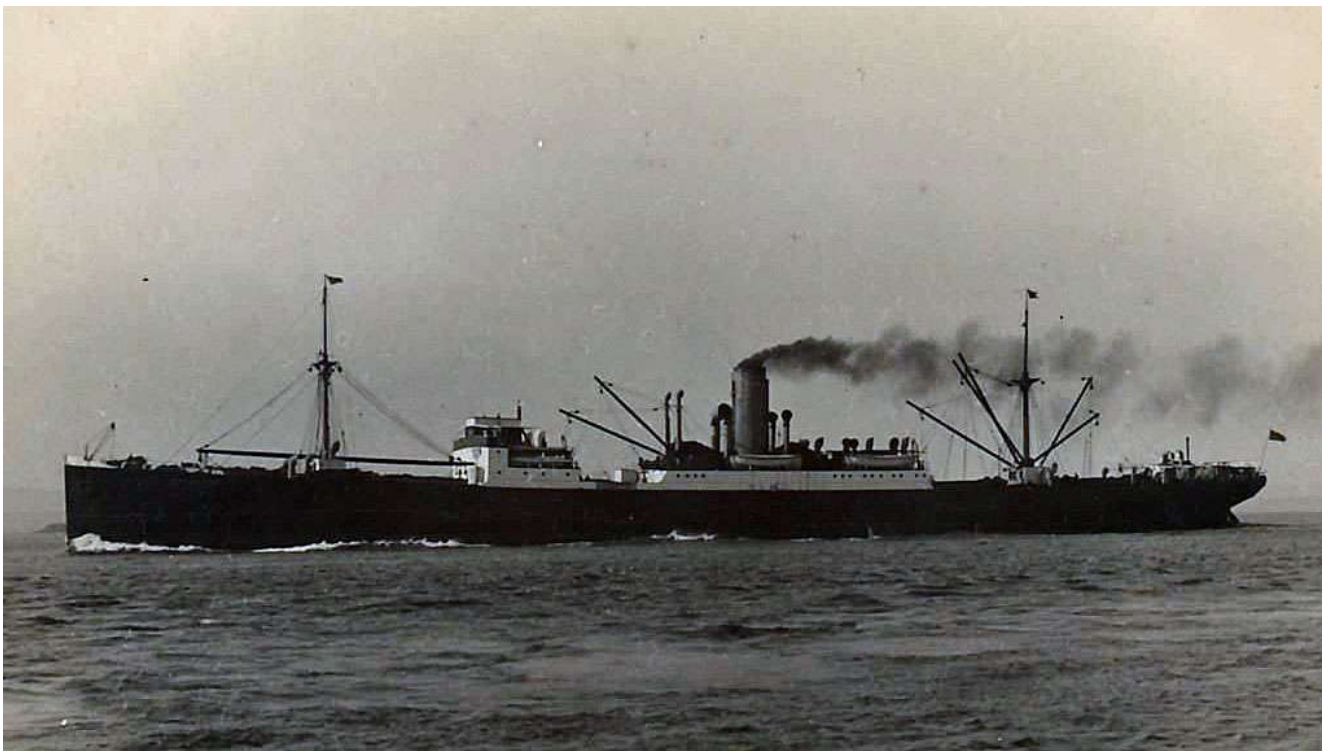
A chaplain blesses Mildura prior to being launched at Mort's Dock, Balmain, Sydney on 15 March 1941. (AWM 006593)



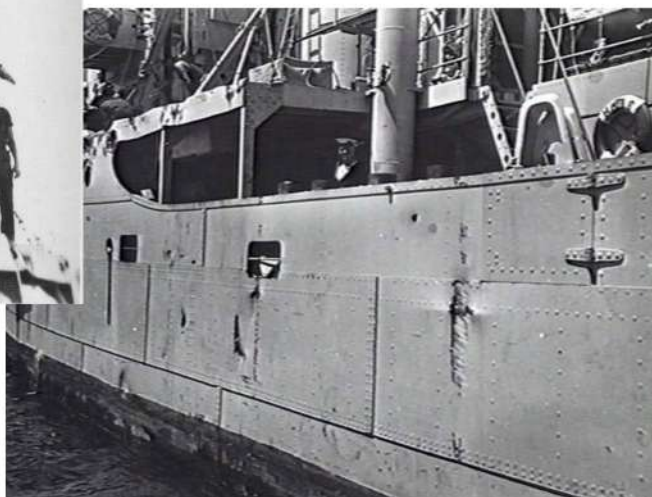
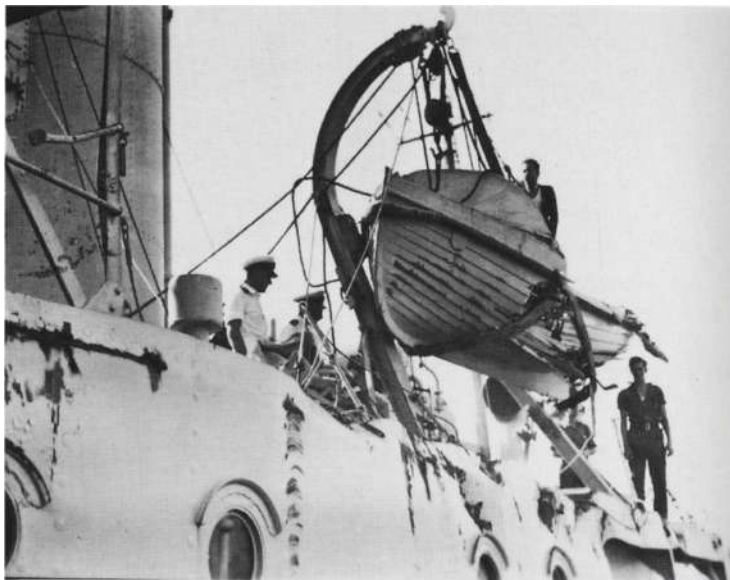
The dry dock is flooded following completion of the launching ceremony.



After fitting out, *Mildura* commissioned at Sydney on 23 July 1941, under the command of Lieutenant George Ewart Vaughan Owen RANR(S). The ship joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla on 29 August 1941, and operated as a unit of the Flotilla until it was disbanded late in 1941. 21 Dec 1941 while on an A/S Patrol of Sydney Heads she was rammed by SS *Berwickshire*.



SS Berwickshire



HMAS Mildura lost her motor-boat and had her side bent in a collision with the SS Berwickshire

On the 31 March 1942, *Mildura* grounded off Amedel Island Lighthouse, taking all day to re-float.



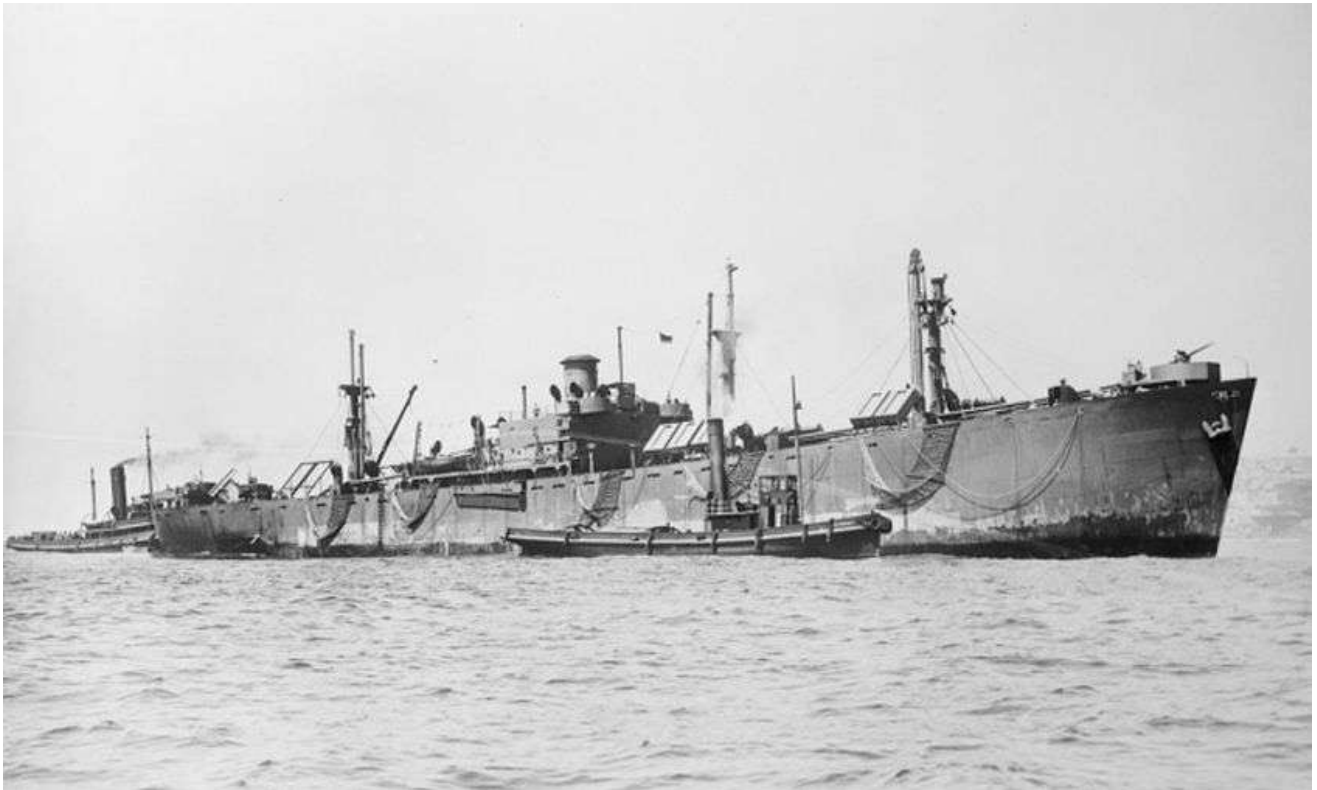
Until August 1942 *Mildura* was engaged in minesweeping, escort duties and anti-submarine patrols in Australian and South Pacific waters.

From September 1942 to December 1943 she operated as one of the escort vessels protecting the movement of Australian east coast convoys. During this period eleven merchant ships were sunk by Japanese submarine off the east coast with a loss of 407 lives.



Two contrasting views of HMAS Mildura. Left: Working up wearing the standard Admiralty pattern grey paint scheme. Right: The ship as she appeared wearing her wartime disruptive pattern camouflage.

In January 1943 *Mildura* assisted in the salvage and tow to Sydney of the disabled American vessel SS *Peter Burnett* which had been torpedoed some 530 miles east of Sydney.



SS Peter Burnett

Several attacks were made on convoys escorted by *Mildura*. The Australian vessel *SS Iron Knight* was torpedoed without warning and sank in two minutes, with the loss of 37 lives on 8 February 1943.

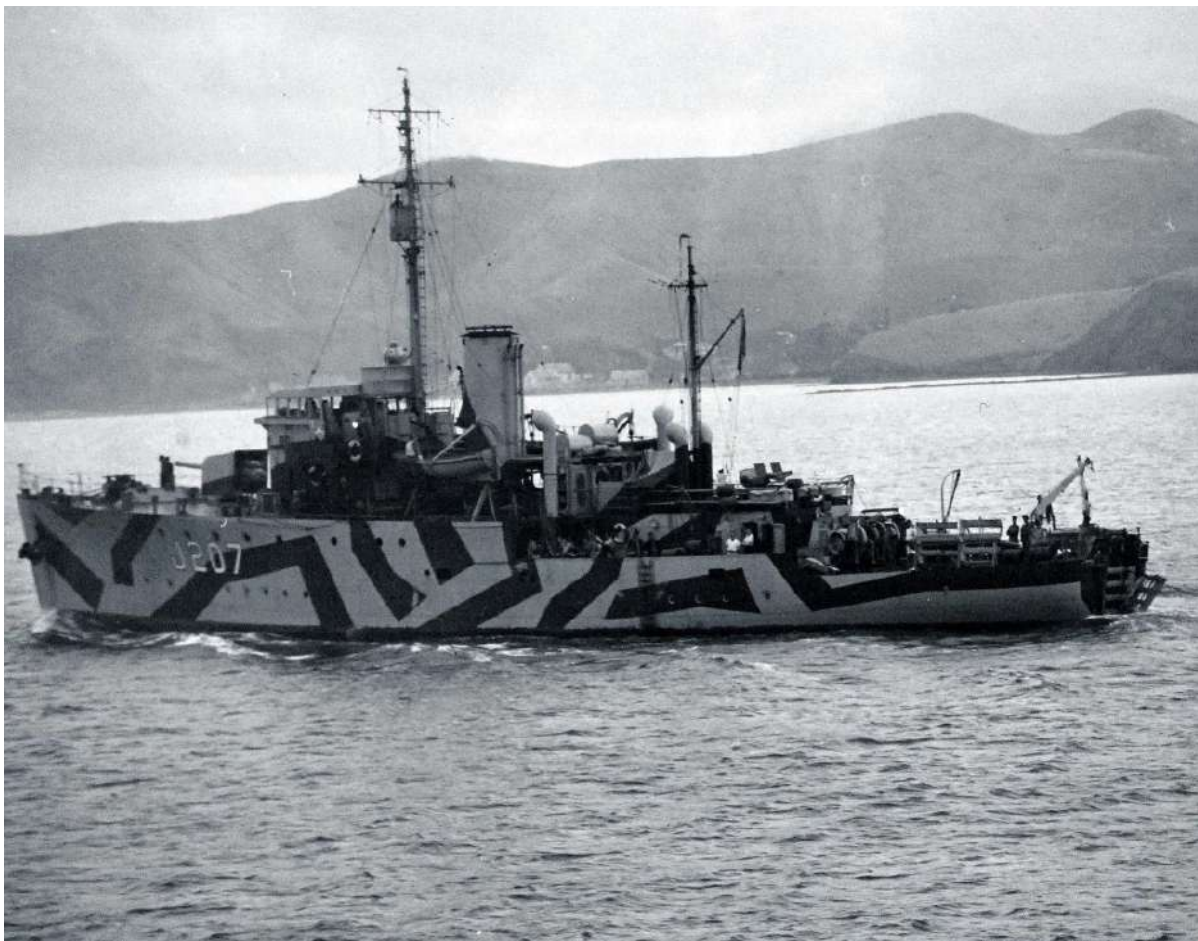


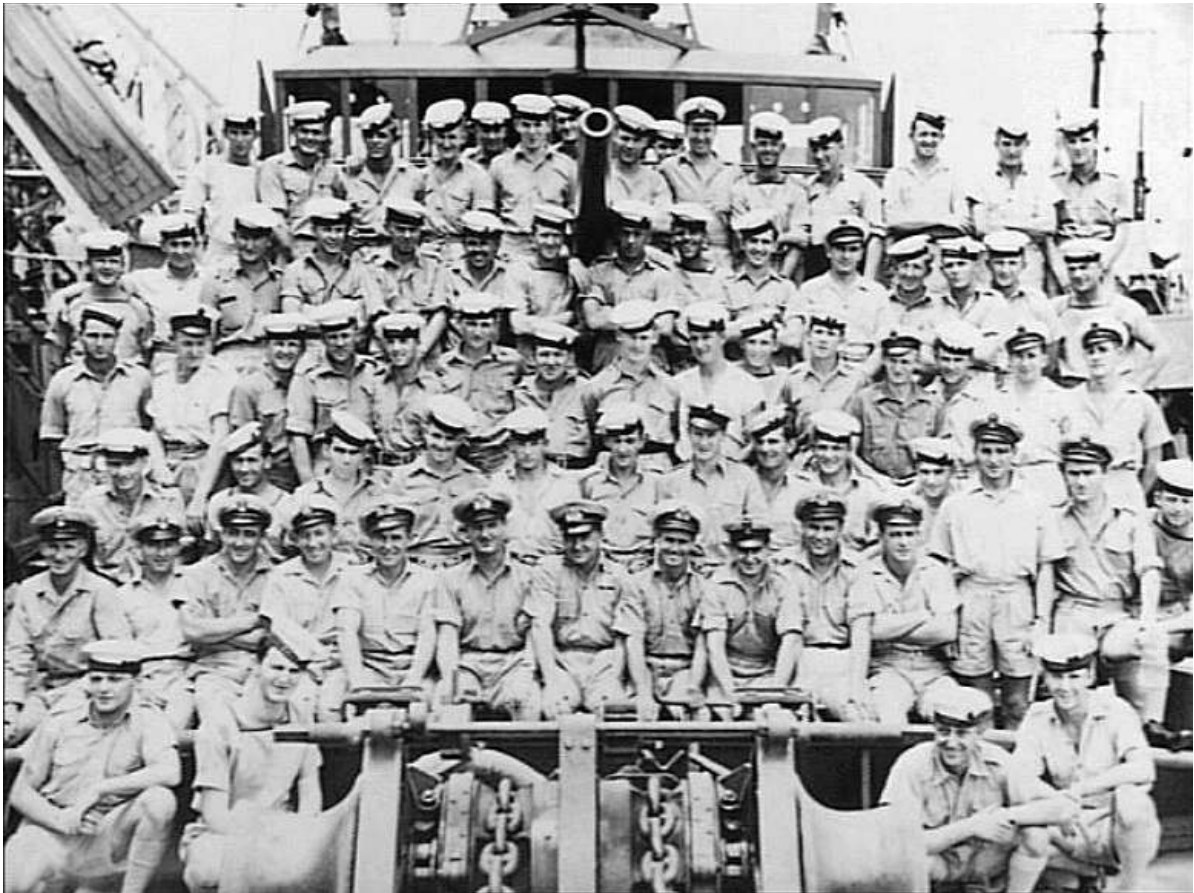
Minesweeping deck 1943



Launching Paravane

From January to July 1944, *Mildura* served on anti-submarine patrol duty in Queensland waters and as escort to convoys proceeding from Townsville to New Guinea. In August 1944 she was transferred to the operational control of the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Fremantle, arriving at that port on 30 August. Until the end of the year she joined with other ships to provide escort and anti-submarine patrols, mainly in the approaches to Fremantle.





Ship's company of Mildura assembled on the fore deck in front of the 4-inch gun in Fremantle, circa 1944.

L-R front row: Reg Hill; Norm 'Fonts' Wells; Jack 'Mickey' Finn; and Ken 'Chips' Sawers.

Second row: Stan 'The Ferret' Parkhill; Noel Herrin; Wally Jarman; 'Pop' Morrison; Lieutenant Reg 'Guns' Nolan (Gunnery Officer); Lieutenant George Sangster (First Lieutenant); Lieutenant Commander Jimmy Little (Captain); Lieutenant Bob Frame; Max Choat; Dave Waite; and Alf Graham.

Third row: Stan 'Grandad' Lees; Lindsay 'Admiral' Bourke; Bill Dunlop; Ian 'Mac' McDonald; Darrell 'Tim' Timothy; John Robson; Col Kroemer; Harold 'Fanny' Medwin; Ross Kalin; Joe Carey; Ernie Morrison; Lennie Melrose; and Tommy Fletcher.

Fourth row: George 'The Count' Wood; Doug Lidden; Jack Sangster; Len 'Bungy' Williams; Bill Peterson; Eric 'Chuffy' Dalton; Tommy Jones; Des 'Mac' McPherson; Bob Nelson; Jeff 'Mac' McFarlane; Gordon 'Bluey' Smyrell; Jack Pantry; Dick Bullen; Ron 'Doc' Endersby; and Bob McGuire.

Fifth row: Raymond 'Snowy' Moore; Harry 'Scrubby' Little; George 'Dungy' Burns; Lach 'Pittsy' Pitts; Jack 'The Ghoul' Coulter; Allan 'Tubby' Walsh; Jack 'Lasher' Hansen; George 'Bomb Head' McClure; Dave 'Spud' Tait; John 'Sandy' Sanderson; Allan 'Doc' Prentice; Max 'Bluey' Herring; Allan 'Snowy' Forbes; Jack 'Dadda' Morey and Stan 'Pappy' Provis.

Back row: Geoff 'Ollie' Twist; Bernie 'Lofty' Lowe; Laurie Codell; George Green; Albert Marley; Brian 'Paddy' Doyle; Gordon 'Woffa' Steel; Jim 'Jacko' Jackson; Albert 'Butch' Freer; Phill Leonard; Alf 'Speed' Thiele; Charles 'Slaggy' Bennetts; Jim 'Diamond' Radburn; Jim Stark; and Nigel Plozza. (AWM P02066.002)

Following a refit at Fremantle, *Mildura* transferred to the control of the Naval Officer-in-Charge, New Guinea, on 14 March 1945. Proceeding via Darwin she arrived at Port Moresby on 28 March 1945, proceeding thence to Morotai. At Morotai she operated as a stationery patrol vessel interspersed with escort duty to Biak.

On 22 June 1945 she proceeded independently to Tarakan, Borneo, where she carried out dusk to dawn harbour approach patrols, returning to Morotai on 1 July. En route a party was landed on Makelhi Island to search for the crew of a wrecked Catalina flying boat sighted on the beach. Six natives who emerged from the bush reported the rescue of the airman by another aircraft. Anxious to leave the area to escape the "Japan man's" attentions, they were given passage to Morotai. The remainder of July was spent at Morotai interspersed with escort duty between Zamboanga and Borneo.

Following two week of patrols and guardship service at Balikpapan, *Mildura* proceeded to Subic Bay in the Philippines where she joined seven of her sister ships to form a Royal Australian Navy Minesweeping Flotilla. The group arrived at Hong Kong on 30 August 1945.

Following a period of boiler cleaning, patrolling, rounding up enemy small craft and taking over the Hong Kong brewery from the Japanese, *Mildura* was allocated as a unit of the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla in mid-September 1945. Minesweeping operations with the Flotilla in Chinese waters continued until 17 October 1945. On 20 October, at Hong Kong, she proceeded "on the first stage of the long and keenly awaited return to Australia".



Members of the crew of Mildura grouped forward of the 4-inch gun off Tarakan Island, circa 1945. (AWM 110293)



Left: An informal group portrait of the communications ratings on Mildura, taken on the deck. Standing, from left: Signaller L Williams; Coder K Wischusen; Telegraphist J Robson. Sitting, from left: Telegraphist W Peterson; Leading Telegraphist N Marryat; Signaller A Waugh; and Telegraphist J Coulter. (AWM P02064.003). Right: Sailors conducting a gun drill, loading the 4-inch gun on the forward deck. (AWM P02064.006)

Mildura reached Sydney on 19 November 1945 after an absence of two years and seven days.

Following a refit *Mildura* resumed service in February 1946 as a unit of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla. Operations with the Flotilla clearing minefields in Australian, New Guinea and Solomon Islands waters kept her fully occupied until October 1947.

On the 10 March 1946, despatched from Hobart to Henry Bay were an ANA DC 3 (VA-AET) from Hobart to Melbourne had crashed with 25 including 3 crew on board.

Searched the bay by our motor boat and a fishing boat for survivors. None Found.



Largest part of VA-AET recovered.



On 16 January 1948 *Mildura* reached Fremantle, where she paid off on 21 May 1948.



Mildura formed part of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla



Mildura flying Paying off Pennant

The Daily News (Perth, WA) Sat 9 Dec 1950

CORVETTE TO REFIT

MELBOURNE, Sat: HMAS corvette *Mildura* was towed to Fremantle from the mothball anchorage at Garden Island yesterday to undergo a refit preparatory to national service training, the navy said today. She is still in reserve and is expected to be recommissioned sometime next year.



HOME AND DRY: Mildura on the slipway at Fremantle in December 1950. Neg: Navy 400

Mildura recommissioned at Fremantle on 20 February 1951 for service as a training ship, under the command of Lieutenant John Ferguson DSC RAN. In this capacity she served in Western Australian waters, training National Service Trainees, until 1953, after which she proceeded to Melbourne.

**ABOVE**

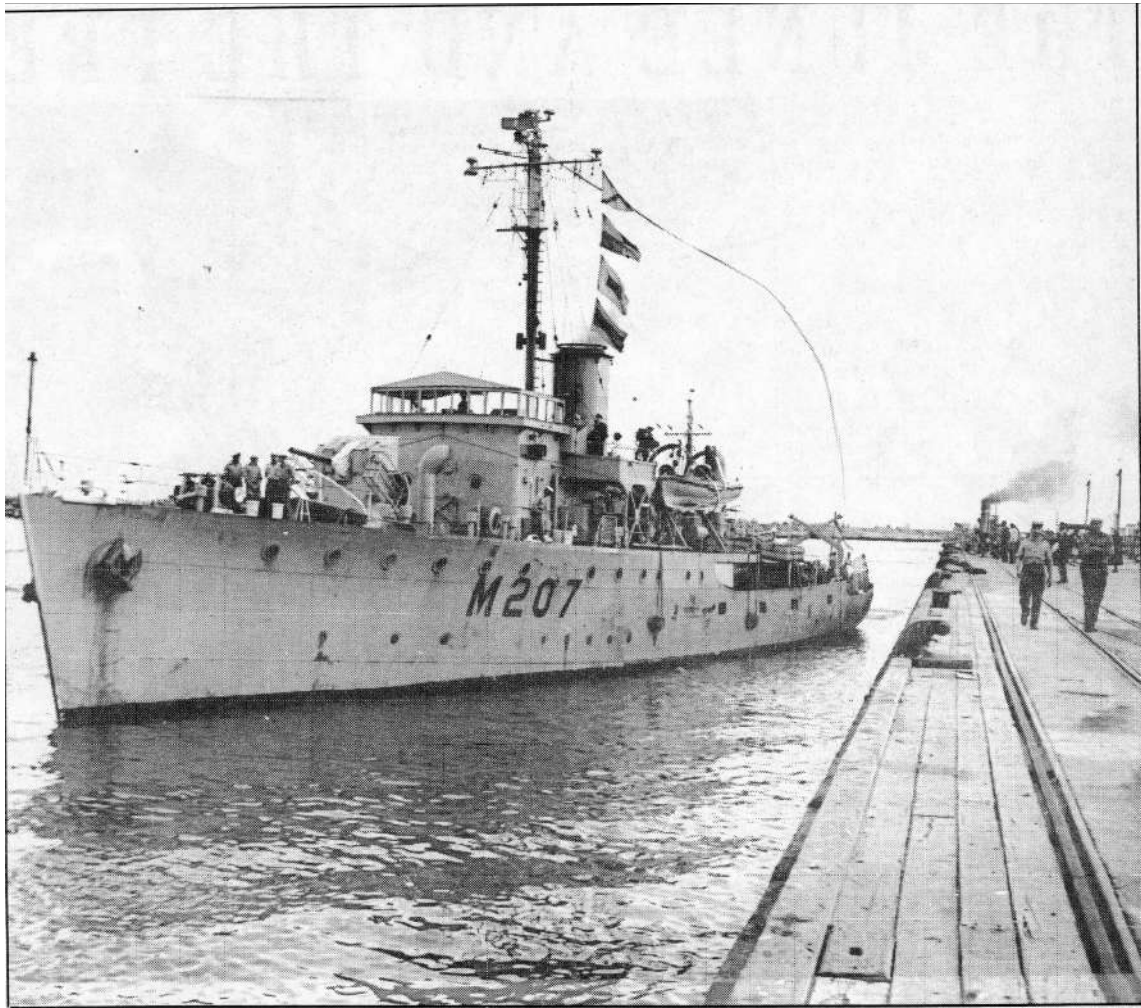
ON THE JOB: Trainees on the bridge of the Mildura in August 1951. The corvette had been recommissioned earlier in the year as a training ship for National Servicemen, based at Fremantle. Built at Mort's Dock, Sydney, in July 1941 she was then commissioned into the RAN. Neg: Navy 4537.



Crew with paravane, August 1951. The *Mildura* was active after the war sweeping up mines laid earlier to protect Australian waters. Paravanes were towed underwater to sever the moorings of mines. Neg: Navy 45.



Three sailors heaving on lifeboat falls in June 1953

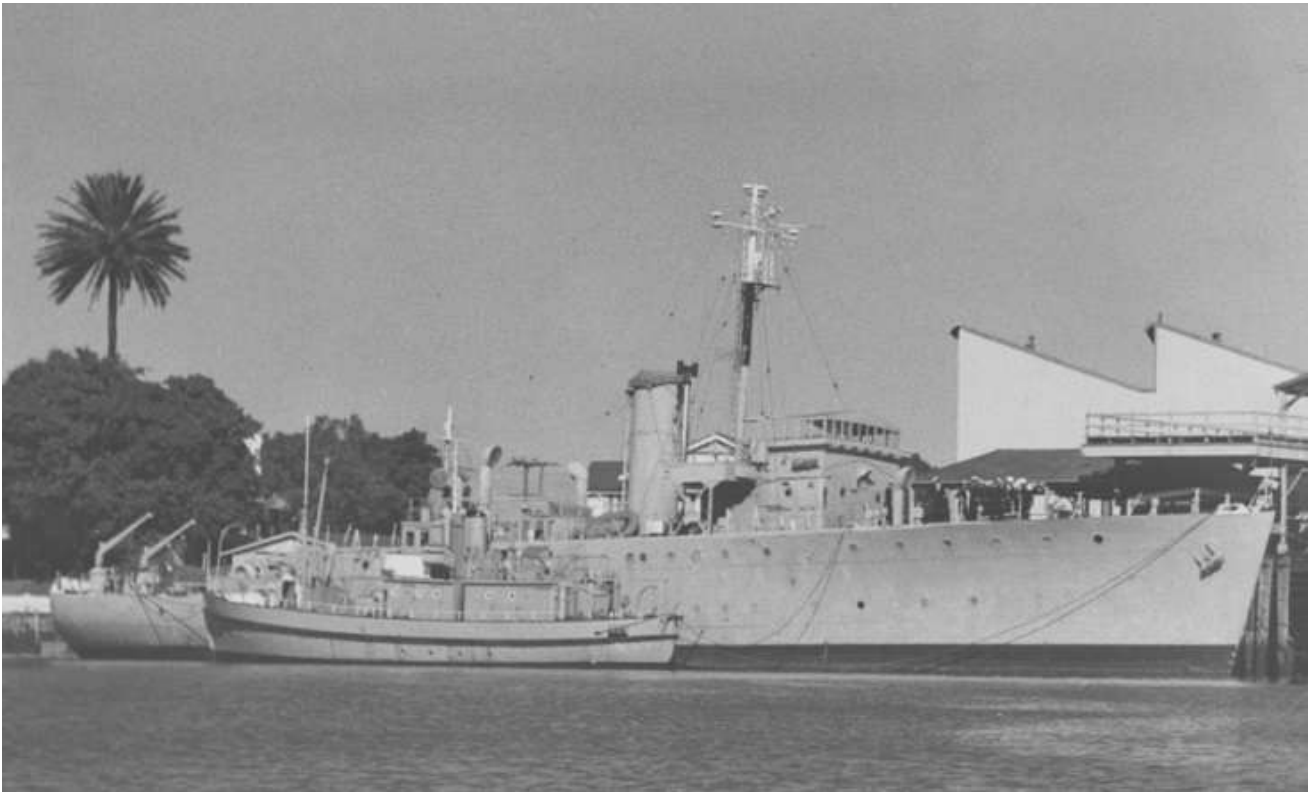


FAREWELL: The Mildura leaves Fremantle harbour en route to pay off. Neg: Navy 73

Mildura paid off at Melbourne on 11 September 1953, having steamed 208,132 miles since first commissioning in July 1941. Into F Class Reserve. On 8 December 1954 the tug HMAS *Sprightly* departed Melbourne with *Mildura* in tow. The vessels arrived at Brisbane on 15 December 1954.

At Brisbane *Mildura* later served as an immobilised reserve training ship.

Mildura was sold for scrap on 8 September 1965 to Brisbane Non-Ferrous Pty Ltd. Broken up Brisbane 1965.



Alongside at HMAS Moreton as training ship.



Mildura's ship's bell is now held in the former council chambers, now the committee room, of the Mildura City Council.

