

HMAS *Parkes* – J361/M361



Namesake:	Town of Parkes, NSW
Builder:	Evans Deakin & Co
Laid down:	16 March 1943
Launched:	30 October 1943
Commissioned:	25 May 1944
Decommissioned:	17 December 1945
Motto:	"Equals with Equals"
	Battle honours:
	Pacific 1944
	New Guinea 1944
Fate:	Sold for scrap in 1957



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, 2,000 hp
Speed:	15 knots (28 km/h; 17 mph) at 1,750 hp
Complement:	85
Armament:	1 × 4-inch gun, 3 × Oerlikons, Machine guns, Depth charges chutes and throwers

HMAS *Parkes*, originally to be named Mudgee for the town of Mudgee, New South Wales, was laid down at Evans Deakin & Co Ltd, Brisbane, Queensland on 16 March 1943. She was launched on 30 October 1943 by Mrs Brown, wife of the President of the Senate, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the NSW regional city.



HMAS Parkes was the last of sixty Australian Minesweepers to be completed. She can be seen here leaving the builder's yard, 15 May 1944.

Parkes commissioned at Brisbane on 25 May 1944 under the command of Lieutenant Commander Norris O Vidgen RANR.



Following trials in Moreton Bay, the ship sailed for Milne Bay on 3 June. After three weeks in New Guinea waters *Parkes* returned to Australia, arriving at Thursday Island on 27 June. Most of July was occupied in the escort of convoys between Thursday Island and Darwin.

At the end of the month the ship proceeded to the Eilanden River in Netherlands New Guinea to embark 78 troops for Merauke. With these personnel safely disembarked *Parkes* sailed for Thursday Island to resume convoy escort duties on the Darwin run.

This work occupied the ship until September 1944. On 18 September she rescued survivors of the SS *Kintore* which had been wrecked on Warrimist Reef (near York Island) four days earlier. On 23 September she sailed for Fremantle.



HMAS Parkes, in the foreground, skirts around the New Guinea landscape. (Illustration by AWM Lette, AWM ART100070)

October and early November proved an uneventful period occupied by routine patrols off Fremantle, before *Parkes* returned to Darwin on 7 November to take up escort and patrol duties in the Arafura Sea. Throughout the rest of November and December *Parkes* operated in the Darwin area. On 20 December she rescued six Dutch former prisoners of war who had succeeded in escaping from enemy held territory in an outrigger canoe.

From then until the end of hostilities on 15 August 1945 *Parkes* continued to be based on Darwin. She was principally occupied with local escort and anti-submarine duties. It was a period of mainly routine activity. However, early in August the ship assisted in the successful extraction by HMAS HDML 1324 of Services Reconnaissance Department personnel from enemy occupied Timor after a clandestine operation.



From left, Lieutenant K Finlayson, Lieutenant WR Blower, Chief Engine Room Artificer D McGuire, Lieutenant Commander NO Vidgen, Sub Lieutenant RF Spratt and Sub Lieutenant MA Gleeson-White. (AWM 115573)



Informal outdoor portrait of Sergeant Keith B Davis, Military History Section (MHS) official photographer, sitting on the deck of HMAS Parkes.

On 7 September 1945 the sloop HMAS *Moresby* (I), accompanied by ten other Australian warships (including *Parkes*) and two Dutch vessels, sailed from Darwin to conduct the ceremony of surrender of all Japanese forces in Timor. Two other RAN vessels joined the convoy, which also included some small craft under tow, on 9 September. The ceremony was conducted at Koepang on 11 September on *Moresby*'s quarterdeck. *Parkes* arrived back at Darwin on 20 September.



Left: Able Seaman S Jones, RAN, manning a 20mm Oerlikon gun, circa 1945. (AWM 115658).

Right: Members of TIMFORCE, AIF and RAN, on their way to occupy Timor, relaxing over a game of cards on the deck, circa September 1945. (AWM 115660)

The following morning Lieutenant William R Blower, RANVR relieved Lt Commander Vidgen in command, and three hours later the ship proceeded with her sister ships HMA Ships *Gympie* and *Katoomba* to rendezvous off Dili with two other sister ships, HMA Ships *Gladstone* and *Warrnambool* on 22 September. After the rendezvous on 23 September the five ships entered Dili harbour. They were joined by *Moresby* on 24 September. The Governor of Portuguese Timor was formally advised of the Japanese surrender and in the evening one officer and ten ratings from each ship attended a thanksgiving ceremony at the Portuguese flagstaff. *Parkes* arrived back at Darwin on 30 September.



Left: Parkes drops a practice depth charge while en route to Soembawa carrying Major John M Baillieu and other SUNFORCE members, circa October 1945. (AWM 120232). Right: (L-R) Captain AD Stevenson, officer in charge of war crimes investigations with SUNFORCE, Sub Lieutenant Glesson-White, HMAS Parkes, and Lieutenant Robson AMF enjoy a cup of tea aboard the corvette. (AWM 120220)

In October *Parkes* again visited Timor and assisted in evacuation of Dutch prisoners of war. Later in the month and in early November troops and stores were transported in the area.



Troops embarking HMAS Parkes for the occupation of Timor, circa September 1945



AT SEA, EN ROUTE TO TIMOR. 1945-09-08. MEMBERS OF TIMFORCE, AIF AND RAN, ON THEIR WAY TO OCCUPY TIMOR, RELAXING ON THE DECK OF THE RAN FLEET MINESWEEPER, HMAS *Parkes*. IDENTIFIED PERSONNEL ARE: ENGINEER ROOM ARTICIFER F. MONAHAN, RAN WITH MANDOLIN; STOKER R. TULLY, RAN WITH BANJO; CORPORAL (CPL) K. BARNES, AIF SPOONS; CPL J. EVERETT, AIF UKELELE.

On 8 November the ship arrived at Darwin and three days later departed that port for the last time. On 21 November *Parkes* arrived at Fremantle.

The Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld) Wed 21 Nov 1945:

CORVETTE *Parkes* TO PAY OFF

PERTH: The corvette HMAS *Parkes* arrived at Geraldton on Monday from Darwin and left about 1.15pm on Tuesday for Fremantle to pay off. HMAS *Parkes* was the last Australian built corvette. When she reaches Fremantle she will have travelled 42,000 miles.

The corvette was built in Queensland and commissioned at Brisbane in May 1944. Her engines were made in Fremantle. Most aboard are from Queensland. *Parkes* participated in the landing at Timor. Most of the past three months has been spent at sea on such missions as landing occupation troops, recovering prisoners of war and taking Japanese prisoners from one island to another for concentration.

The vessel is commanded by Lieutenant W. R. Blower, RANVR, who enlisted at Flinders Naval Depot in 1940. He rowed as No 2 in Queensland King's Cup Race in 1927 and also played in inter-State hockey.

Parkes paid off into Reserve at Fremantle on 17 December 1945. She had steamed 43,021 miles since commissioning.



*At the end of hostilities many of the Bathurst Class Corvettes were decommissioned or placed in reserve. Here HMAS *Parkes* can be seen in the foreground moored to a buoy.*

Without being again brought forward for service, *Parkes* was sold for scrap on 2 May 1957 to Hong Kong Rolling Mills Ltd, of Hong Kong. On 25 November 1957 Departed Fremantle along with HMAS Glenelg and Katoomba under tow of tug Bustler. Broken up in Hong Kong 1958.



A partially stripped Parkes nested with her sister ships, Glenelg and Katoomba awaiting disposal, with tug Bustler.



Parkes' bell