

## HMAS *Pirie* – J189/B249/A123



Namesake: City of Port Pirie, SA  
 Builder: Broken Hill Co  
 Laid down: 19 May 1941  
 Launched: 3 December 1941  
 Commissioned: 10 October 1942  
 Decommissioned: 5 April 1946

**Battle honours:**

Pacific 1942–45  
 New Guinea 1943–44  
 Okinawa 1945

Fate: Sold to Turkish Navy

**Turkey**

Name: Amasra  
 Commissioned: 1946  
 Decommissioned: 26 March 1984



Displacement: 733 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, 2,000 hp  
 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)  
 3 × 20 mm Oerlikons (1 later removed)  
 1 × 40 mm Bofors (installed later)  
 Machine guns  
 Depth charges  
 chutes and throwers

Ordered for the British Admiralty and commissioned by RAN, HMAS *Pirie* was laid down on 9 May 1941 and was launched by Mrs Kleeman, wife of Whyalla Superintendent, Broken Hill Pty Ltd on 3 December 1941.



*HMAS Pirie's launch at Whyalla, 3 December 1941.*

She commissioned at Whyalla on 10 October 1942 under the command of Lieutenant Commander Charles F Mills, RAN (Emergency List).

*Pirie* completed her working up period in home waters in December 1942 before being assigned to convoy escort duty operating between Queensland, New South Wales and New Guinea. She was at Milne Bay on 24 March 1943, when 27 enemy aircraft passed overhead en route to attack shore targets.

Off Oro Bay (New Guinea) on 11 April 1943, *Pirie* was escorting the British vessel SS *Hanyang* as part of Operation LILLIPUT, the reinforcement, supply and development of the Buna-Gona area after its capture. *Pirie* was subjected to a particularly determined attack by a large force of Japanese fighters and dive bombers.

She experienced six very close misses and one direct hit which struck the bullet proof canopy over the bridge, penetrated it, glanced off the helmsman's protective apron, struck and killed instantly the Gunnery Officer and then striking the upper deck, exploded killing six ratings and wounding four others. Fortunately after hitting *Pirie* the enemy broke off the attack, having lost several aircraft hit by close range anti-aircraft fire.



*HMAS Pirie with 12 Pound Gun*



CANNON SHELL HOLES STRAFING FORECASTLE  
H.M.A.S. "PIRIE" 11/4/43.



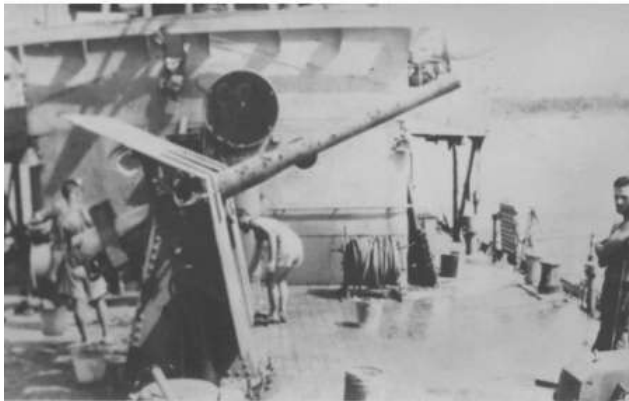
BOMB DAMAGE BEHIND 12 POUND GUN  
H.M.A.S. PIRIE 11/4/43.



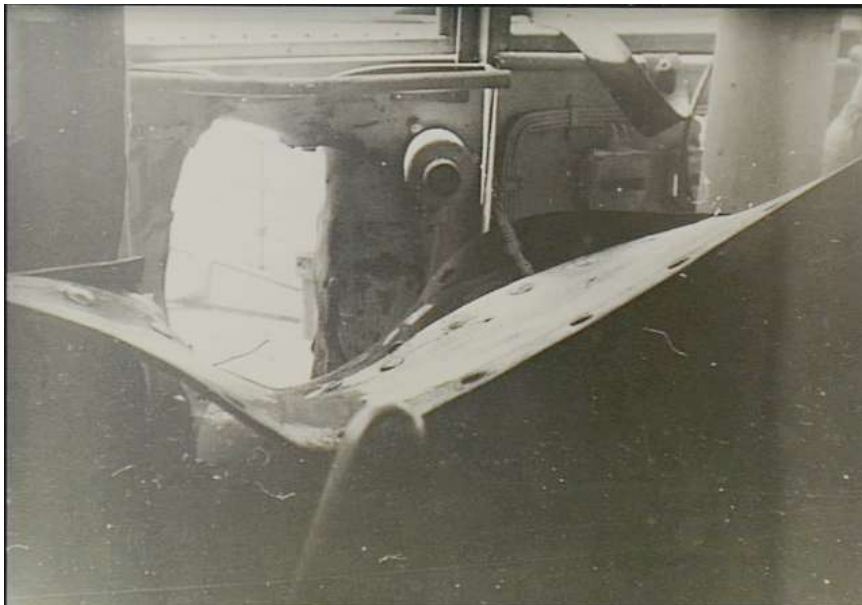
DORKY McKENDRICK INSPECTS BOMB  
DAMAGE H.M.A.S. "PIRIE" 11/4/1943.

*Damage to HMAS Pirie's forward deck and superstructure necessitated in her returning to Australia to undergo repairs.*





*Bomb Entrance to Bridge*



*Bridge Damage*

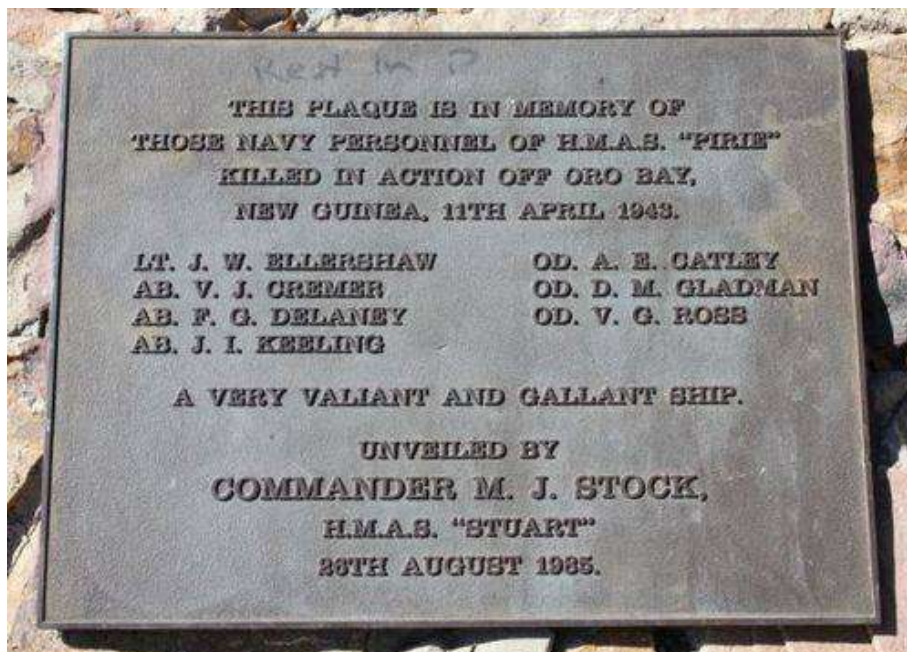


*Bomb Exit from Bridge*





Left: HMAS *Pirie* memorial plaque. Right: A piece of timber from *Pirie*'s deck in the collection of the Sea Power Centre Australia serves as a touchstone to the events of April 1943.



Repairs were completed in May 1943 and *Pirie* resumed operations escorting convoys proceeding between the Australian east coast and New Guinea. At this time Japanese offensive submarine operations in Australian waters were drawing to a close after being active for several months.

### Mutiny, June 1943

After repairs, by the time the ship had arrived back on station at Townsville the crew were unhappy with the captain's strict rules, especially those regarding the 'rig of the day' and which uniform could be worn on a run ashore. Lt. Cdr Mills, unlike other corvette captains who allowed their crew to go ashore in a variety of uniforms, insisted that his men wear their best dress 'Number 1's'. The unrest amongst the 'Hostilities only' ratings appears to have been further inflamed upon *Pirie*'s entry into Townsville Harbour when the pipes "Hands fall in, in rig of the day" and "Down all washed clothes" was made.

HMAS *Bowen* was shifting berth to go alongside Wagga at the time, the contrast could not have been more obvious – clothes were strung all over the ship with a wash line strung from the funnel to the fresh water tank containing washed clothes and all along 'X' deck, and the crew on the Quarterdeck were wearing only shorts.

At 08:20 on the morning of Wednesday June 9th Lt. Cdr Mills received a report from his Executive Officer Lieutenant R. A. Lorains RANR(S) that the pipe "Hands fall in" at 08:15 had not been obeyed and that the Ship's Company were congregated on the mess deck and that certain hands had not obeyed his personal order to fall in. Lt. Cdr Mills ordered "Hands fall in" to be piped again immediately, but this also was disobeyed.

The acting Coxswain proceeded to the mess deck to find out what grievances were alleged by the crew and he returned ten minutes later with a list of nine complaints. The captain called for a 'clear lower deck' but none of the Ordinary or Able Stamen attended. At 17:20 the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Townsville accompanied by an armed guard boarded *Pirie*.

He ordered the pipe "Clear lower deck – everybody aft" to be piped, this time the pipe was obeyed. Articles 10 and 11 of the articles of war were read, with the Naval Officer-in-Charge ordering *Pirie* to sea calling on any men who were unwilling to sail the ship to stand aside. No Rating stood aside and the hands were warned that the ship would sail at 20:23 for Cid Harbour, Whitsunday Islands.

A Board of Inquiry following the so-called 'mutiny' was conducted from 11:00 on Thursday June 10th until 16:00 on Friday June 11th. The resulting punishments were handed out at 08:05 on Tuesday June 15th when punishment warrants were read before the ship's company at a 'clear lower deck' - nine of these were for imprisonment, with the offenders departing *Pirie* immediately, several other crewmen received drafts to other ships.

Following the Board of Inquiry and the ship purged of the undesirable ratings, *Pirie* spent the next six months escorting between Australia and New Guinea. *Pirie* began her second refit at Garden Island Dockyard, Sydney from Saturday November 13th until Sunday December 5th 1943 with the crew on long leave.

Lieutenant David Simpson Thomson, RANR(S), assumed command during the refit. During the refit she received a new 4" Q.F. Mk. XIX gun and new A.272 and A.286P Radar units. On completion of her post refit work-up she returned to convoy escort duties between Townsville and New Guiana beginning with convoy TN.197 which sailed from Townsville on December 24th, arriving at Milne Bay on the 28th. On March 10th 1944 *Pirie* was transferred to the Darwin Station escorting between Thursday Island and Darwin. She escorted her next convoy TD.50 from Thursday Island on April 5th.

Following *Pirie's* return to service only two ships were lost in Australian waters as a result of Japanese submarine attacks. These were the hospital ship *Centaur*, which was lost with 268 lives on 14 May 1943, and the United States vessel SS *Protmar*, which was torpedoed and sunk off the New South Wales coast on 16 June 1943.

*Pirie* was under refit at Garden Island from mid-November to early December 1943. From April to July 1944 *Pirie* was mainly engaged in escorting convoys moving along Australia's northern coast between Thursday Island and Darwin.

In August 1944 she was assigned to duty as a minesweeper and assisted by her sister ship HMAS *Kalgoorlie* began a series of clearing sweeps of defensive minefields in the Great Barrier Reef area. This task was completed at the end of September 1944 and on 24 November 1944 the ship was designated as a unit of the 22nd Minesweeping Flotilla on its reformation.

After a refit at Brisbane *Pirie* sailed for Fremantle in mid-December 1944.



*Members of HMAS Pirie's ship's company photographed on board the corvette*

On 31 January 1945 *Pirie* sailed from Fremantle for Sydney, and from there on 24 February, sailed for Manus (Admiralty Islands) as a unit of the British Pacific Fleet. From Manus she proceeded to the Philippines and until hostilities ended, except for three weeks spent in Brisbane in June, she was almost constantly at sea acting as an escort vessel to units of the fleet. *Pirie* also participated in the operation for the capture of Okinawa (March to May 1945).

On the 4 April 1945 with both vessels moving at twelve knots and only an arm's distance between them, *Pirie* rising on the crest of a wave and HMS *Swiftsure* going down in the swell, the two vessels made contact. The noise was deafening, and corvette shook violently as the port wing of the bridge was bent and buckled upwards and her motor boat crushed.



*Left: Damaged port wing of the bridge and port motor boat and stanchions*





*Damaged to motor boat crushed after collision with HMS Swiftsure off Okinawa*

On 31 August 1945 *Pirie* entered Tokyo Bay, being the third Australian warship to enter Japanese home waters since hostilities commenced, preceded only by the destroyers HMA Ships *Napier* and *Nizam*. In mid-Sept she proceeded to Hong Kong where she was engaged on local patrol duty until 11 October 1945, when she sailed for Australia. She reached Brisbane on 30 October 1945. After service in Australian waters, which included a visit to her namesake town of Port *Pirie*, the ship arrived at Sydney on 28 February 1946. She had steamed a total of 117,230 miles since commissioning in October 1942.



*The CVE Speaker passes Pirie as she made her way through the assembled ships of the allied fleet on her way out of Tokyo Bay, her ship's company and rescued POWs cheer and wave to each ship they pass.*



*Pirie at Port Pirie in February 1946. Note she is wearing her British Pacific Fleet pennant number and is equipped with types A272 & A286Q radar.*



*HMAS Pirie's ship's bell recording the year of her commissioning in the RAN.*



On Monday January 14th 1946 *Pirie* received orders to sail direct to Sydney, where she was to be decommissioned and transferred to the Royal Navy along with her sister corvettes *Gawler* and *Launceston*. She secured to No.9 Buoy off Darling Point at 14:00 on January 18th. During her time with the RAN she had steamed a total of 117,230 miles at an average speed of 10 knots, with a total of 11,700 hours underway.



On April 5th 1946 HMAS *Pirie* was decommissioned and recommissioned on the same date into the Royal Navy as HMS *Pirie*. This was a temporary commission however as she was to be transferred to the Turkish Navy along with *Gawler* and *Launceston*.

The three corvettes departed Sydney Harbour for the last time on May 21st 1946. *Pirie* arrived at Istanbul on August 11th 1946 and was recommissioned as TCG *Amasra* as a unit of the Turkish Navy. *Amasra* was placed under the command of Commodore Kenan Tinaz.

Together with four other ex-corvettes they served with the No.1 Mine searches and Minesweeper within a fleet of destroyers. *Amasra* searched for mines dropped by the Germans in the Black Sea opening of the Bosphorus in 1947, and in 1948 swept the mines dropped in Bodrum Harbour. She was placed in the Logistical Support Fleet on 7th November 1960. She served until 1971, to be put out of service on 26th March 1984.