

## HMAS *Rockhampton* — J203



**Namesake:** City of Rockhampton, QLD  
**Builder:** Walkers Limited, QLD  
**Laid down:** 6 November 1940  
**Launched:** 26 June 1941  
**Commissioned:** 21 January 1942  
**Decommissioned:** 5 August 1946

**Battle honours:**  
 Pacific 1942–45  
 New Guinea 1944

**Fate:** Sold for scrap in 1961



**Displacement:** 650 tons (standard), 1,025 tons (full war load)

**Length:** 186 ft (57 m)  
**Beam:** 31 ft 1.5 in (9.487 m)  
**Draught:** 8.5 ft (2.6 m)  
**Propulsion:** triple expansion engine, 2 shafts

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

**Complement:** 85  
**Armament:** 1 × QF 12-pounder gun

**Oerlikons:** 3 × 20 mm

Machine guns  
 Depth charges  
 chutes and throwers

*Rockhampton* was built at Walkers Ltd. Maryborough and launched 26 June 1940 by Mrs Walker, wife of the Chairman of Directors, Walkers Ltd.



*Rockhampton on the builder's slipway at the Walkers yard, Maryborough, Queensland, circa 1941.*

HMAS *Rockhampton* commissioned at Maryborough on 21 January 1942 under the command of Lieutenant Robert Thomas Salmon RANR(S).





*HMAS Rockhampton*

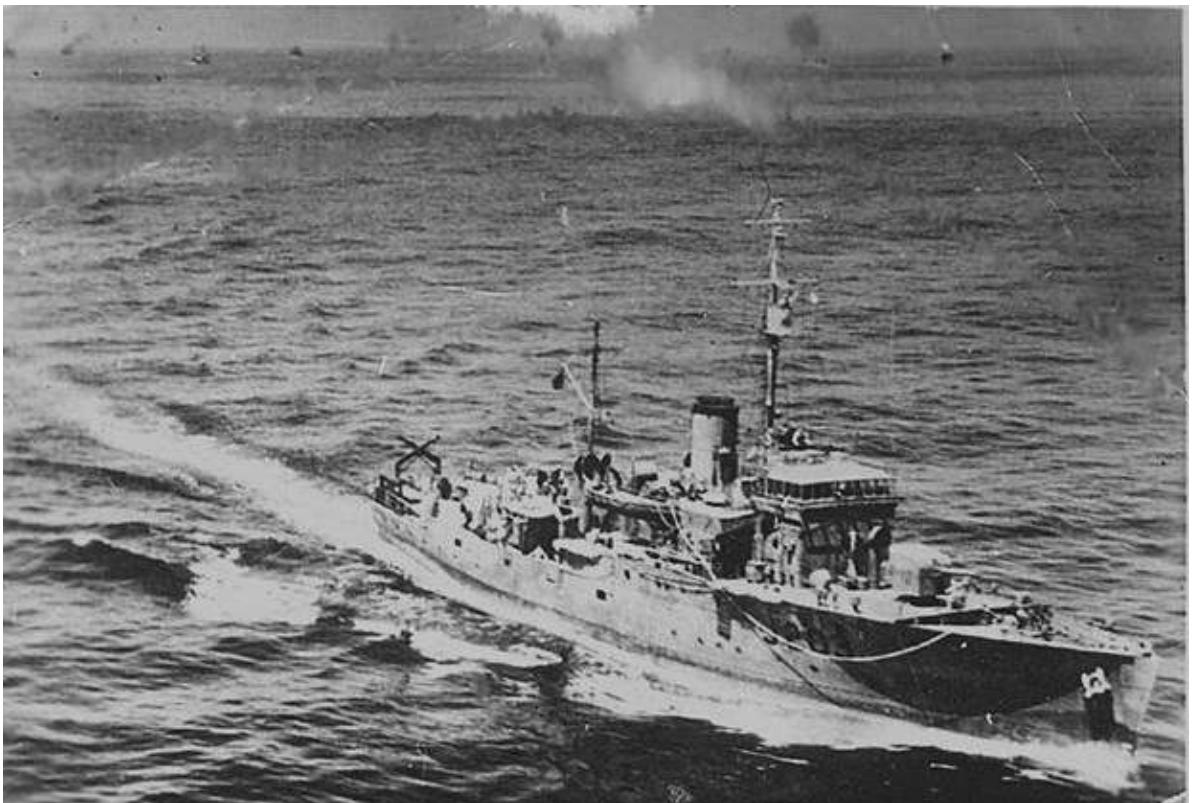


*HMAS Rockhampton was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy in 1942*



*HMAS Rockhampton 1942 Brisbane River*

*Rockhampton* began her operational service as a convoy escort on Australia's eastern seaboard. In June 1942 convoys were routinely under escort following a series of successful attacks by Japanese submarines off the Australian coast. *Rockhampton*, in company with USS *Selfridge*, escorted the first 'GP' convoy between Sydney and Brisbane. She also escorted one convoy to Noumea in September 1942.







In November 1942, two ships in a convoy under the escort of *Rockhampton*, collided. One of the ships, the SS *Zvir*, sank and the survivors had to be rescued. On another occasion an abandoned Sikorsky plane was sighted and a search made for the crew – it was later learned that they were safe.

In October 1943 Lieutenant Commander Alan J Travis, RAN assumed command of *Rockhampton*. Under Travis' command, *Rockhampton* continued east coast convoy escort duties until January 1944 at which time she proceeded to the New Guinea operational area, escorting convoys from north Queensland ports to Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Langemak, Hollandia and Morotai.

Those duties ceased in March 1944 and *Rockhampton* returned to Sydney on 4 April before proceeding to Adelaide for a refit between 12 April-20 May. *Rockhampton* resumed service in New Guinea waters in June 1944, escorting convoys between the ports of Hollandia, Langemak, Madang and Morotai.

In July 1944 she went to the assistance of USS *Porcupine*, an Armadillo Class tanker, which had run aground near Tami Island south east of Finschhafen. After a strenuous tussle the vessel was eventually freed.



*USS Porcupine. (Naval History and Heritage Command NH84198)*

In September 1944 Lieutenant GJA Ashley-Brown, RAN was appointed in command before being relieved by Lieutenant Commander Herbert Kennedy Dwyer, RANR.



*Lieutenant Commander HK Dwyer. RANR on the bridge wings of Rockhampton, circa 1944.*

During the first half of 1945, *Rockhampton* was operating predominately between Morotai and Biak before briefly returning to Australian waters in June.



*Left: Signalman Dunkerley and Leading Signalman Baillie signalling by Semaphore, (AWM 108629), and right: Signallers HE Edenborough and G Collier operating a large signal projector aboard Rockhampton while on convoy duty shortly before the ship's return to Australia. (AWM 108633)*



*Left: Rockhampton sailors painting the ship's side as part of general maintenance. (AWM 108666) Right: Sailors preparing potatoes for meal-time were known as 'spud barbers'. (AWM 119205)*

*Rockhampton* returned to New Guinea in Sept 1945 for further service in the Morotai area.



*Painting Ship 1945*

In September 1945, following the cessation of hostilities, *Rockhampton* in company with her sister ships *Bowen*, *Glenelg*, *Junee* and *Latrobe* evacuated Dutch and Indonesian internees and prisoners of war from Menado, northern Celebes disembarking them at Morotai. The rescued party included 145 children, 111 women and 65 men.

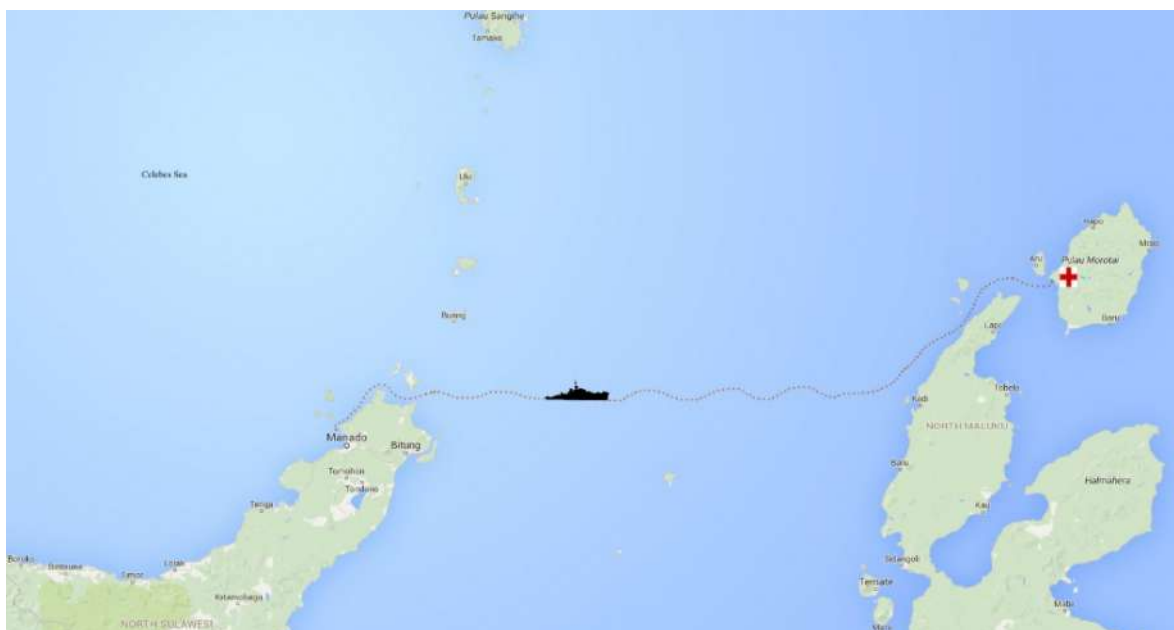




*Liberated Dutch and Indonesian internees wait patiently to board Rockhampton. Those rescued comprised mainly women and children many of whom were ambulance cases.*



*Commanding Officer H K Dwyer 1945*



The effort of *Rockhampton's* crew during the evacuation was recognised by Captain H Ross Macourt of the Australian Army Medical Corps who recorded the following in official correspondence to the Commanding Officer of the 2/9th Australian General Hospital:

Dear Sir,

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Captain, Officers and crew of HMAS *Rockhampton* for their magnificent effort in helping me bring out of the Celebes nearly ninety Dutch internees. As you know there were mainly women and children and 50% were hospital cases.

I expected co-operation from the ship but not the wonderful help that was given. A small ship was made as comfortable for my patients as humanly possible. Sailors, stokers, etc., came off duty only voluntarily and unselfishly give up all their sleeping hours to carry out the unaccustomed and not very pleasant chores necessary in nursing sick. Without being asked, they carried bed pans, washed patients and were at the beck and call of all. The cooks need special mention as they never went off duty - cooked the special diets I had asked from, and then acted as Mess Stewards until all were fed.

Movements Control congratulated me on our disembarkation at Morotai. Such congratulations, I would like to convey to Officers and crew, for it was they who carried out the smooth disembarkation of sick, well and their luggage.

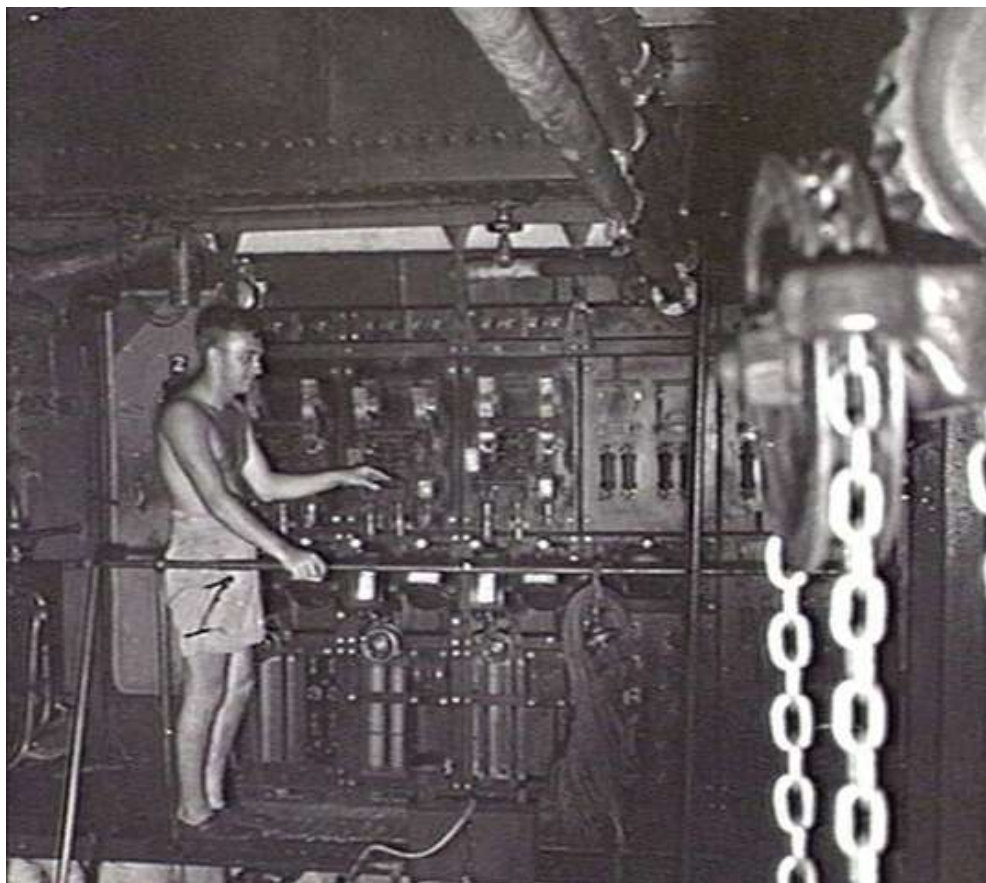
As one of the sailors from the ship remarked to me "It is the best job the ship has ever done." I would like to put another meaning on this phrase and answer "No ship's crew could have done a better or more unselfish job."

I would be very pleased if you would convey my thanks to H.M.A.S "*Rockhampton*" for making a very difficult job possible.

(Signed) H. R. Macourte. Capt.  
AAMC



*Engine Room Artificer B Priestly and Chief Engineer Lieutenant AH McConkey, October 1945.  
(AWM 119202)*



*Rockhampton's switchboard*



*Weighing Anchor*



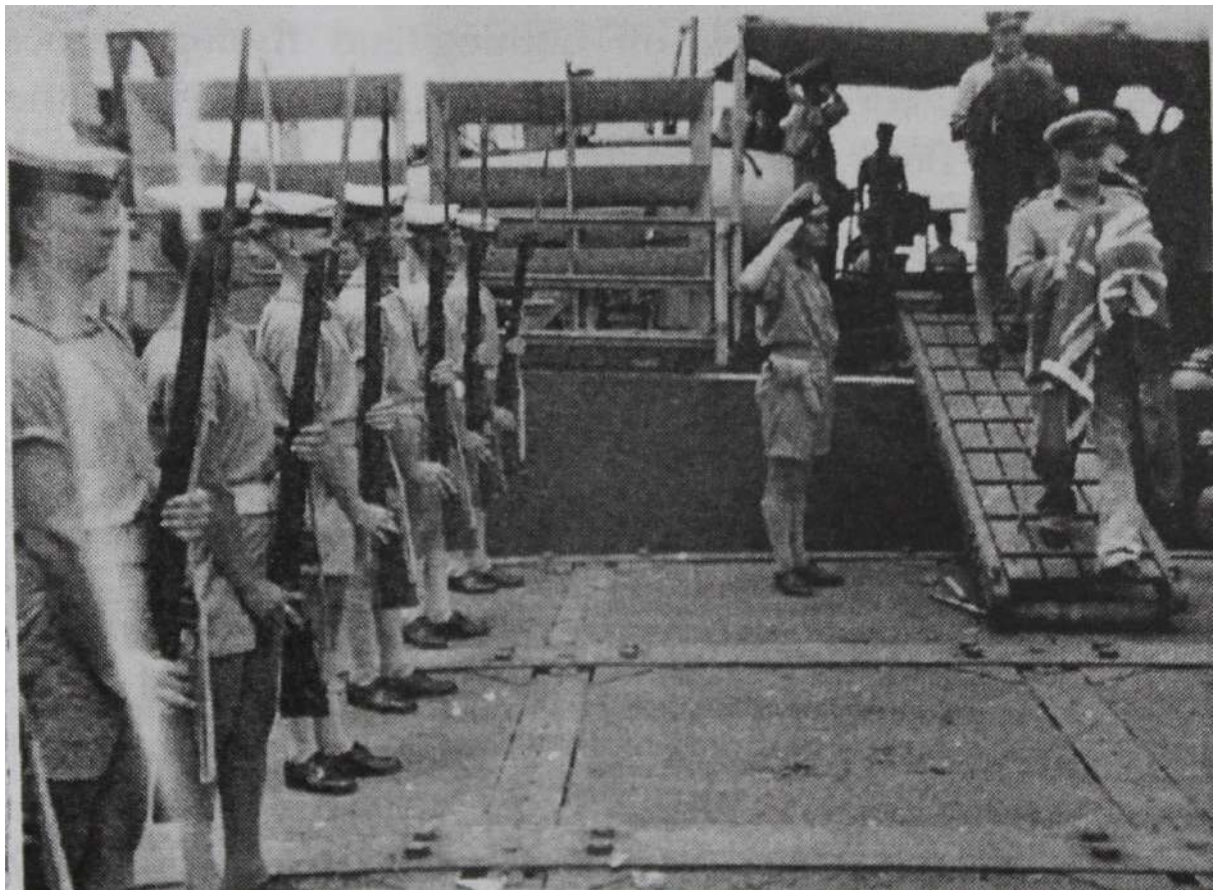
*Rockhampton* was also one of the Australian warships to support the occupation of Ambon following the surrender of Japanese forces on the island.

On 8 October 1945 *Rockhampton* arrived at Tenate in the Halmaheras with the Sultan of Ternate on board as a passenger. The proclamation of the surrender of the Japanese was read and all of the ship's officers were entertained by the Sultan at lunch and a dance.

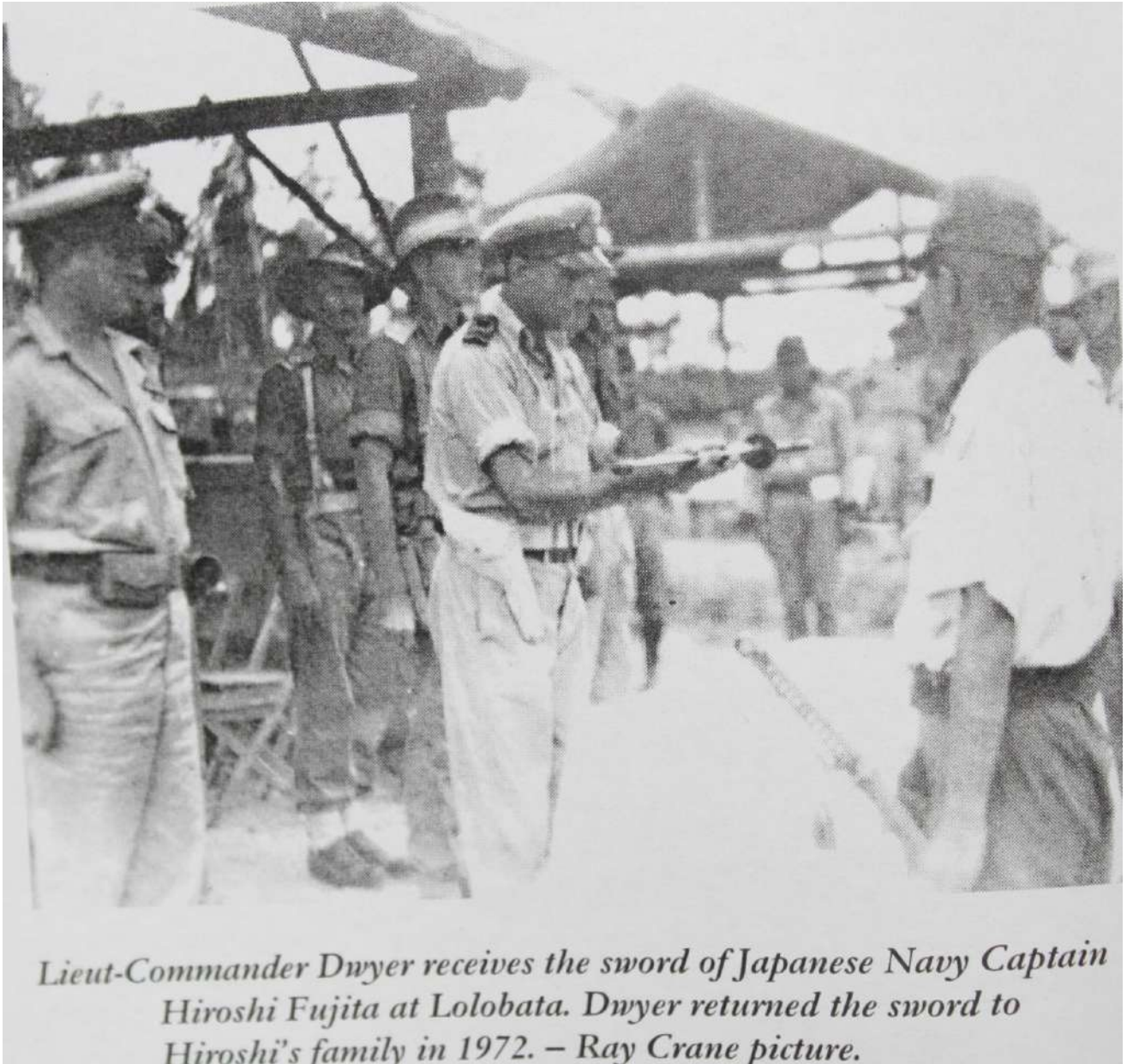


*Boxing match at Morotai 1945. From left Ron Merritt, Max Pemberton, Ron Rideout, Leslie Hams*





*22 Oct 1945 at Morotai. Remains of two airman were being taken ashore*



*Rockhampton* departed Morotai on 23 October 1945 for the return passage to Australia, returning to Sydney, via Townsville and Brisbane, on 13 November.





*On the 4 November 1945 picked up a boat load of survivors from the SS Atlas which had grounded on Bougainville reef.*



*Rockhampton at Thursday Island 1945*



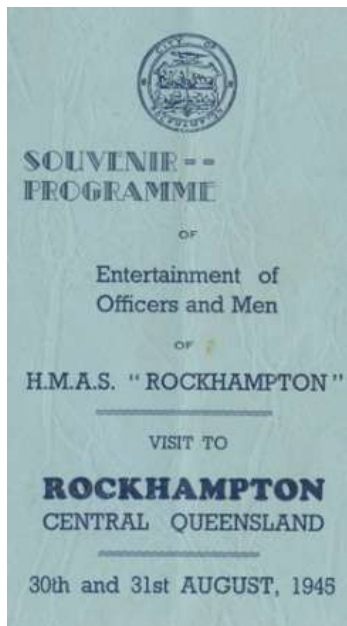
*Berthing at Thursday Island*

On 30-31 August 1945 she visited her namesake city, Rockhampton, Queensland, where she was met by His Worship the Mayor, Alderman H Jeffries and Aldermen of the Rockhampton City Council. Representatives of the Rockhampton Patriotic and Public Bodies were also in attendance.

The visit proved popular with both the citizens of Rockhampton and the corvette's ship's company. In a letter home from Ordinary Seaman Gill Wahlquist to his father in September 1945 he recorded:

We were cheered and shown around the city as if we were heroes instead of just sailors off a corvette. As we stepped on to the wharf we were each given a souvenir booklet printed specially to commemorate our visit.





The Morning Bulletin,  
ROCKHAMPTON.  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1945.

## HMAS ROCKHAMPTON ON VISIT TO CITY

### WARM WELCOME FROM PUBLIC

Punctual to the minute, the corvette HMAS Rockhampton arrived at the city wharf at 4 p.m. yesterday on a 24 hours' visit to Rockhampton. As the corvette swung to her berth, the Mayor (Mr H. Jeffries) called for three cheers from the crowd, to which the ship's company, at the call of Lt.-Commander H. K. Dwyer, enthusiastically responded.

## PRESENTATION TO CITY

At the civic reception yesterday to officers and men of HMAS Rockhampton, Lt Commander H. K. Dwyer presented to the city the white ensign flown by HMAS Rockhampton in her last action, together with a commission pendant. The pendant, a long, narrow, white bunting with a red cross flown next to the mast, is 3 ft long on commissioning. For each six months the vessel is in commission, the pendant is lengthened six inches.

Receiving the emblems on behalf of the city, the Mayor (Mr H. Jeffries) said the presentations marked a most outstanding occasion in the city's history, and he accepted them with pride, pleasure and gratitude.



August 1945 on the slipway at Birkenhead, S.A.

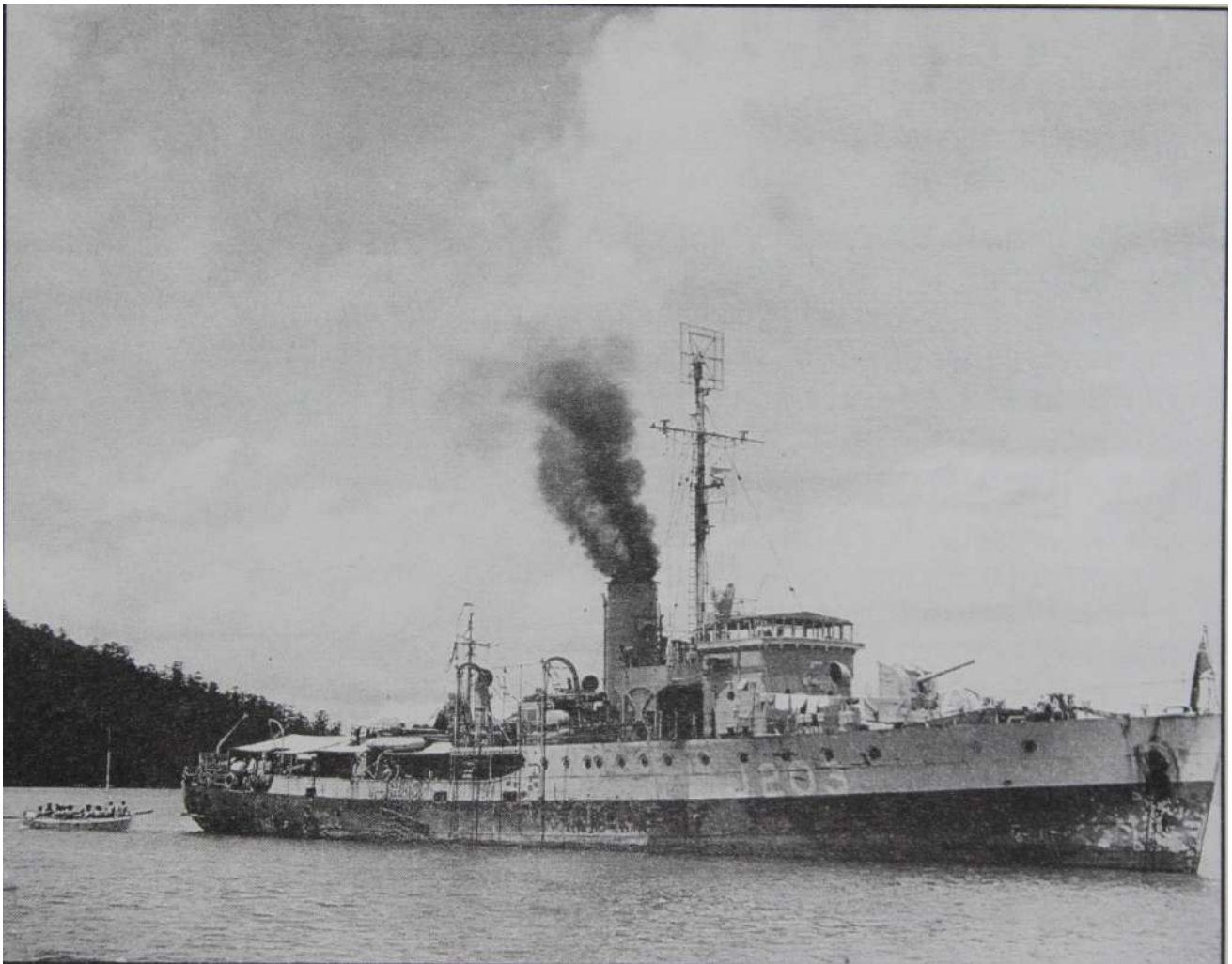


*At Rockhampton 1945*



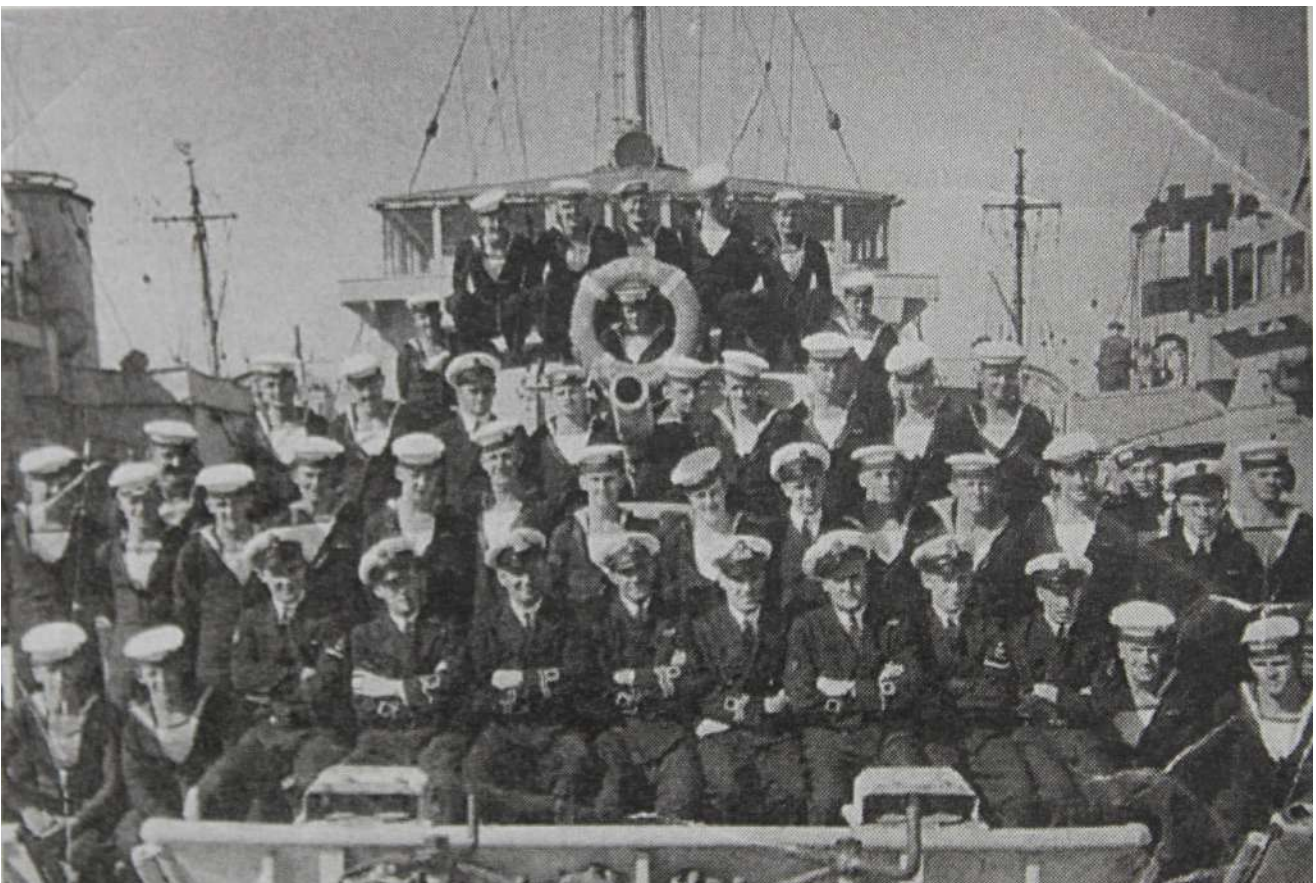
*.MOROTAI, 1945-10-22. HMAS ROCKHAMPTON, CARRYING THE HALMAHERA FORCE WITH JAPANESE WAR CRIMINALS AND LARGE QUANTITIES OF JAPANESE EQUIPMENT, COMING IN TO BERTH AFTER A SEVENTEEN DAY VOYAGE ROUND THE HALMAHERAS.*





*WHITSUNDAY PASSAGE, QUEENSLAND. 1945-11-07. THE CREW OF HMAS ROCKHAMPTON SPEND A MORNING OFF FROM THEIR SHIP ON AN ISLAND IN WHITSUNDAY PASSAGE. ONE OF THE SHIP'S BOATS PULLS AWAY WITH PERSONNEL BOUND FOR THE ISLAND*

On her return to Australia *Rockhampton* joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla and took part in post war minesweeping operations off the Australian east coast, Bass Strait and later at Hobart. This was followed by survey duties in South Australia before she departed Adelaide on 15 April 1946 for passage to Sydney, where she arrived on 29 April 1946



1946 at Williamstown





*HMAS Rockhampton was decommissioned on 5 August 1946 after steaming over 170,000 miles for the Royal Australian Navy*

*Rockhampton* paid off into F Class Reserve at Sydney on 5 August 1946, having steamed some 176,077 miles.

She was sold as scrap to Mitsubishi Shoji Kaiha Ltd. 6 January 1961. 21 May 1961 Depart Sydney along with HMAS Cowra under tow of tug Benton Maru. Broken up in Japan.

