

## HMAS *Whyalla* – J153/B252/A126



Namesake: City of Whyalla, SA  
 Builder: Broken Hill  
 Laid down: 24 July 1940  
 Launched: 12 May 1941  
 Commissioned: 8 January 1942  
 Decommissioned: 16 May 1946

Battle honours:  
 Pacific 1942–45  
 New Guinea 1942–44  
 Okinawa 1945

Fate: Sold into civilian service

### Victorian Public Works Department

Name: Rip  
 Acquired: 10 February 1947  
 In service: 1947  
 Out of service: 1984  
 Reclassified:  
 Lighthouse maintenance vessel  
 Fate: Sold in 1984

### Whyalla City Council

Name: Whyalla  
 Acquired: Late 1984  
 Status: Landlocked museum ship

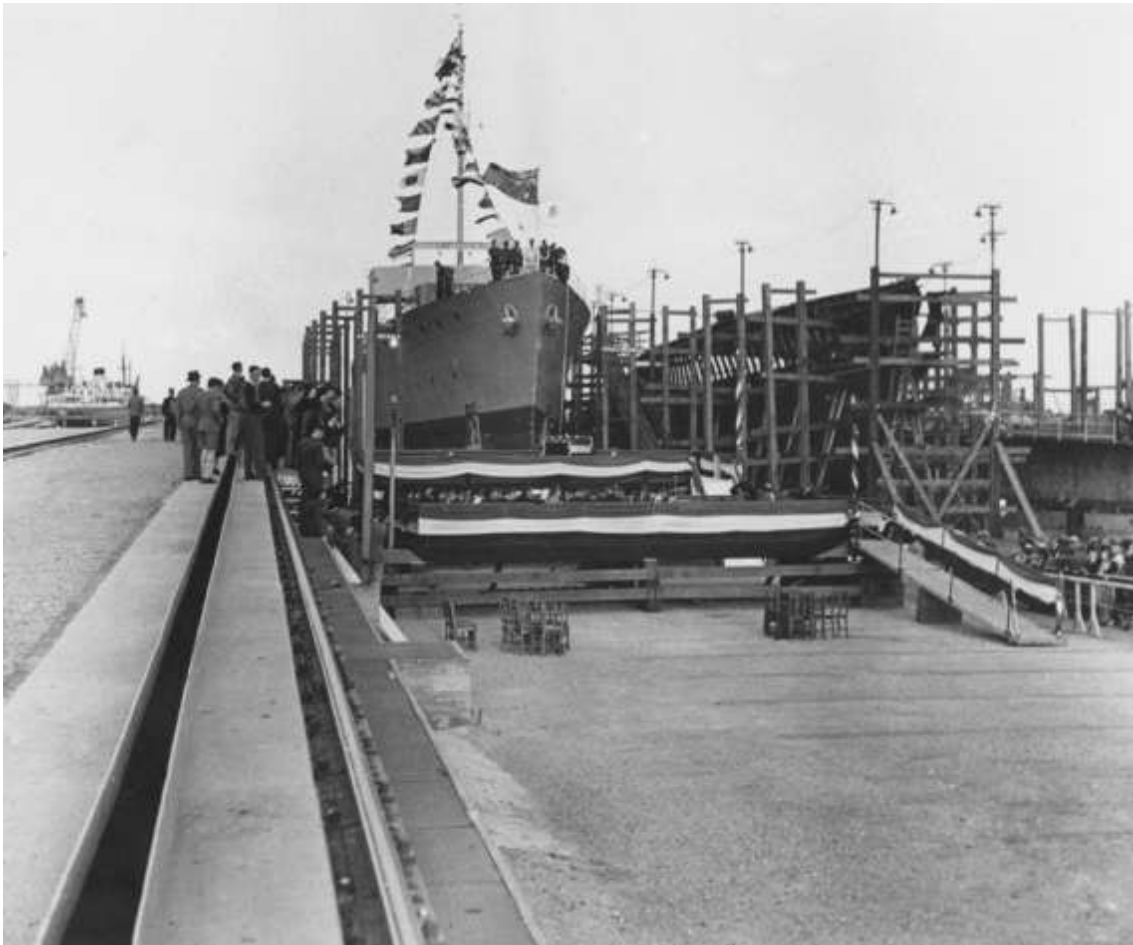


Displacement: 733 tons  
 (standard)  
 Length: 186 ft (57 m)  
 Beam: 31 ft (9.4 m)  
 Draught: 8.5 ft (2.6 m)  
 Propulsion: triple expansion  
 engine, 2 shafts

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

hp  
 Complement: 85  
 Armament: 1 × 4-inch gun  
 3 × Oerlikons  
 (1 later removed)  
 1 × Bofors  
 (installed later)  
 Machine guns  
 Depth charges  
 chutes & throwers

Ordered for the British Admiralty and commissioned by RAN. HMAS *Whyalla* was originally allocated the name of Glenelg, and was built By Broken Hill Pty Ltd, *Whyalla*. Laid down 27 July 1940. Launched 12 May 1942 by Lady Barclay-Harvey, wife of the Governor of South Australia.



*Whyalla prior to her launching at Broken Hill Pty Ltd, Whyalla on 12 May 1941.*



*HMAS Whyalla launching.*



*Whyalla* commissioned at Whyalla on 8 January 1942 under the command of Lieutenant Leslie N Morison RANR(S).

Following commissioning and a work up period, *Whyalla* went into service on escort and patrol duty on the Australian east coast. She was in Sydney Harbour on the night of 31 May/1 June 1942 when the Japanese midget submarine attack took place, and was one of a number of ships allocated as escorts when Australian coastal convoys were instituted on 8 June 1942.

On 12 June 1942, with the United States destroyer USS *Perkins*, she was escorting a convoy of eight ships bound from Newcastle to Melbourne when the straggling Panamanian ship *Guatemala* was torpedoed and sunk. *Whyalla* continued east coast coastal convoy escort duty until December 1942. No further losses were suffered by any of the convoys of which she was one of the escorting units.

In December 1942 *Whyalla* proceeded to New Guinea where she took part in the operations leading to the capture of Buna at the end of the year. In 1943 she continued operations in the New Guinea theatre, operating as a survey ship.

On 2 January 1943, in McLaren Harbour, Cape Nelson, New Guinea, *Whyalla* and the small survey vessels HMA Ships *Wareen* (*Stella*) and *Polaris* were attacked by six dive bombers escorted by twelve fighters. All bombs missed their targets and except for minor damage from near misses and two sailors wounded by splinters, *Whyalla* escaped unscathed.

*Whyalla* continued the hazardous work of surveying the inadequately charted New Guinea waters until the end of April 1943, when she was relieved by HMAS *Shepparton*.

She was at anchor in Milne Bay on 14 April when assembled shipping was attacked by forty to fifty bombers and about sixty fighters. Again the ship escaped serious damage but other vessels were not so fortunate. The Dutch merchant ship *Van Heemskerk* was a total loss. *Whyalla* and her sister ships HMA Ships *Kapunda* and *Wagga* drew praise from the Naval Officer-in-Command ashore for their rescue and salvage work, remarking that "we were indeed fortunate to have the assistance of the three corvettes".





HMAS *Whyalla* in camouflage while on survey duties with Survey vessel alongside. In June 1943 *Whyalla* returned to Australia for a major refit and was then reallocated for east coast convoy escort duty. She was engaged constantly on this service until February 1944, followed by a period on Sandy Cape anti-submarine patrol interspersed with escort duty, before further service in New Guinea waters from June 1944.



*Starboard bow view of Whyalla in Brisbane, Queensland. Behind her is the sloop HMAS Swan. Note a SC radar is fitted to the masthead and a type 272 radar lantern is mounted above and behind the bridge.*

In December 1944 she was attached to the British Pacific Fleet as a unit of the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla, consisting of nine Australian minesweepers.



*Whyalla wearing her British pennant number B252. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)*

In 1945 until the end of hostilities *Whyalla* served on escort and anti-submarine patrol duty. During the period of March to May 1945 she escorted shipping between Manus and the Philippines before returning to Australia for refit in June. This period included participation in the operations for the capture of Okinawa (March to May).

The ship proceeded to Manus on 2 July 1945 for further escort service to the forward areas. In the immediate post war period the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla proceeded to Hong Kong. *Whyalla* however, served only briefly in Chinese waters. In October she returned to Australia having steamed some 111,000 miles on war service.



*Whyalla* paid off at Brisbane on 16 May 1946.

On 10 February 1947 *Whyalla* was sold to the Victorian Public Works Department.

The Argus (Melbourne) Sat 8 Nov 1947

# CORVETTE COMING AS PILOT VESSEL

BRISBANE, Fri: The former corvette HMAS *Whyalla* will leave Brisbane tomorrow for Melbourne towed by the naval tug Reserve. The *Whyalla* was paid off in 1946 and was sold in May this year to the Melbourne Harbour Trust for use as a pilot vessel. The tow is expected to take seven days.

On 8 November 1947 the tug HMAS *Reserve* departed Brisbane for Melbourne with *Whyalla* in tow. The vessels arrived at Melbourne on 14 November. *Whyalla* was handed over to her new owner and renamed *Rip*, being employed as a lights maintenance vessel.





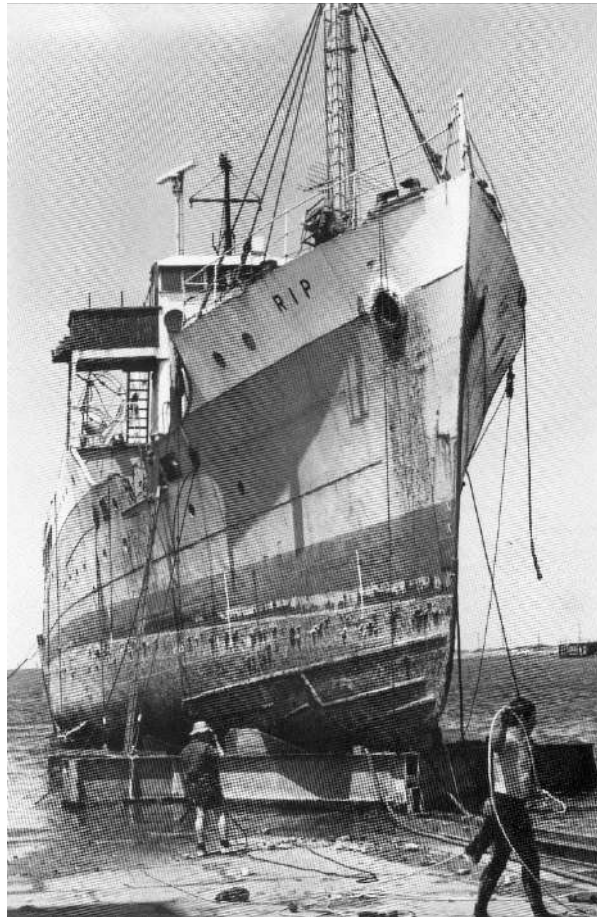






She ceased service as *Rip* in 1984. When the Whyalla City Council became aware that the ship was to be sold as scrap, successful negotiations resulted in the Council purchasing her for \$5000. She returned to Whyalla under her own power later in 1984.

Between February and April 1987, *Whyalla* was slowly moved up the slipway from which she was launched in 1941, and then relocated two kilometres inland and placed on permanent foundations, becoming the centrepiece for the Whyalla Maritime Museum which was officially opened on 29 October 1988. *Whyalla* is one of only two Bathurst Class preserved as museum ships, the other being HMAS *Castlemaine* in Williamstown, Victoria.



*Coming onto the Slipway at Whyalla 1987*



*Whyalla being relocated to the Whyalla Maritime Museum by road.*





*Whyalla* as a museum ship at the Whyalla Maritime Museum, SA.



Tourists on board *Whyalla*.

