

HMAS Wollongong – J172/B253/A127



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

301737

Namesake: City of Wollongong, NSW
Builder: Cockatoo Docks
Laid down: 29 January 1941
Launched: 5 July 1941
Commissioned: 23 October 1941
Decommissioned: 11 February 1946
Motto: "Heed the Call"

Battle honours:

Pacific 1942–45
 Indian Ocean 1942–45
 Sicily 1943
 Mediterranean 1943
 East Indies 1943
 Okinawa 1945

Fate: Transferred to RNN

Netherlands

Name: Banda
Fate: Transferred to TNI-AL

Indonesia

Name: Radjawali
Acquired: April 1950
Fate: Sold for scrap in 1968



Displacement: 650 tons
Length: 186 ft (57 m)
Beam: 31 ft (9.4 m)
Draught: 8 ft 6 in (2.59 m)
Propulsion: Triple expansion, 2 shafts, 2,000 hp
Speed: 15 knots (28 km/h; 17 mph)
Complement: 85
Armament: 1 × 4 inch gun, 3 × Oerlikons (later 2), 1 × Bofors (later), Machine guns, Depth charge chutes & thrower

Ordered for the British Admiralty and commissioned by RAN. HMAS *Wollongong* was laid down on 21 January 1941 at Cockatoo Docks and Engineering, Sydney. She was launched by Mrs Beasley, wife of the minister of Supply and Shipping on 5 July 1941. *Wollongong* began her operational career escorting merchant convoys on the east coast of Australia.



Wollongong at sea during acceptance trials. Note the 'Red' ensign flying from her mainmast.





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Commissioned at Sydney on 23 October 1941 under the command of Lieutenant Gordon A Keith RANR(S).

On 11 January 1942 *Wollongong* departed Darwin for Singapore in company of her sister ships HMAS *Toowoomba* and HMAS *Ballarat*, undertaking escort, patrol and evacuation duties throughout the campaigns in Malaya, Java and Sumatra.

She sailed from Singapore at midnight on the night of 6/7 February 1942, with Commander Farquharson and his staff on board who had been responsible for operating the Australian AMS vessels throughout the Singapore campaign.

Wollongong was the last Australian warship to leave before the city's surrender to Japanese forces on 15 February. Picking up her sister ship HMAS *Bendigo* (I), which had left Singapore a few hours earlier, *Wollongong* proceeded first to Palembang, where the two ships joined *Ballarat* and *Toowoomba*.

With the Allied situation rapidly deteriorating as the enemy advance continued, *Wollongong* sailed from Tanjong Priok, Batavia, at about midnight on the night of 27/28 February 1942 as rear escort of a convoy of six ships, the main escorts of which were the sloops HMAS *Yarra* and HMIS *Jumna*. One of the vessels, the minesweeper HMS *Gemas*, turned back to Tanjong Priok and had to be sunk on 2 March by *Ballarat* to prevent her capture.



Wollongong in wartime camouflage.



1942

Some four hours after the convoy sailed the tanker HMS *War Sirdar* ran aground on a reef west of Tanjong Priok. *Wollongong* detached and stood by until daylight when she made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to tow the tanker off the reef. The efforts were terminated by an enemy air attack and *Wollongong* set off to re-join the convoy after advising *War Sirdar* to abandon ship and land on a nearby island. Commodore JA Collins, CB, RAN (commanding the American, British, Dutch, and Australian (ABDA) Detachment of the Eastern Fleet) was advised.

Further misfortune befell the convoy after dark on 28 February, when the tanker SS *British Judge* was torpedoed south of Sunda Strait. However, she remained afloat and proceeded to Tjilatjap some distance astern of the convoy at slow speed and escorted by *Wollongong*.

When the convoy arrived off Tjilatjap, Commodore Collins ordered *Jumna* to Colombo, and *Yarra* (II) and the convoy to Fremantle. *British Judge* intercepted the signal to *Jumna* and passed it to *Wollongong*, who instructed the latter to make for Colombo independently, while *Wollongong* set course for Fremantle. *Wollongong's* detachment from the convoy almost certainly saved the ship from destruction. *Yarra* and her three remaining charges, the depot ship HM *Anking*, the tanker HMS *Francol* and the minesweeper MMS 51 were sunk south of Java on 4 March by a strong Japanese force.

Following a period of escort duties in Western Australian waters, *Wollongong* departed Fremantle on 14 September 1942 for Diego Garcia to become a unit of the Eastern Fleet. For more than two years she operated on escort and patrol in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, with the exception of a period from mid-1943 to the end of September in that year when she served in the Mediterranean.



HMAS Wollongong at sea.

On 13 July 1943, three days after the start of the Allied invasion of Sicily, *Wollongong*, in company with her sister ships HMAS *Cairns*, HMAS *Cessnock* and HMAS *Geraldton*, visited the island as part escort of a convoy from Alexandria. They spent the day carrying out an endless chain patrol off the beach and saw an American Liberty Ship blown up in an air raid.

On two occasions (one in August and one in September) *Wollongong* entered the Atlantic to rendezvous with Mediterranean bound convoys for which she acted as part escort. Each comprised seventy five ships.

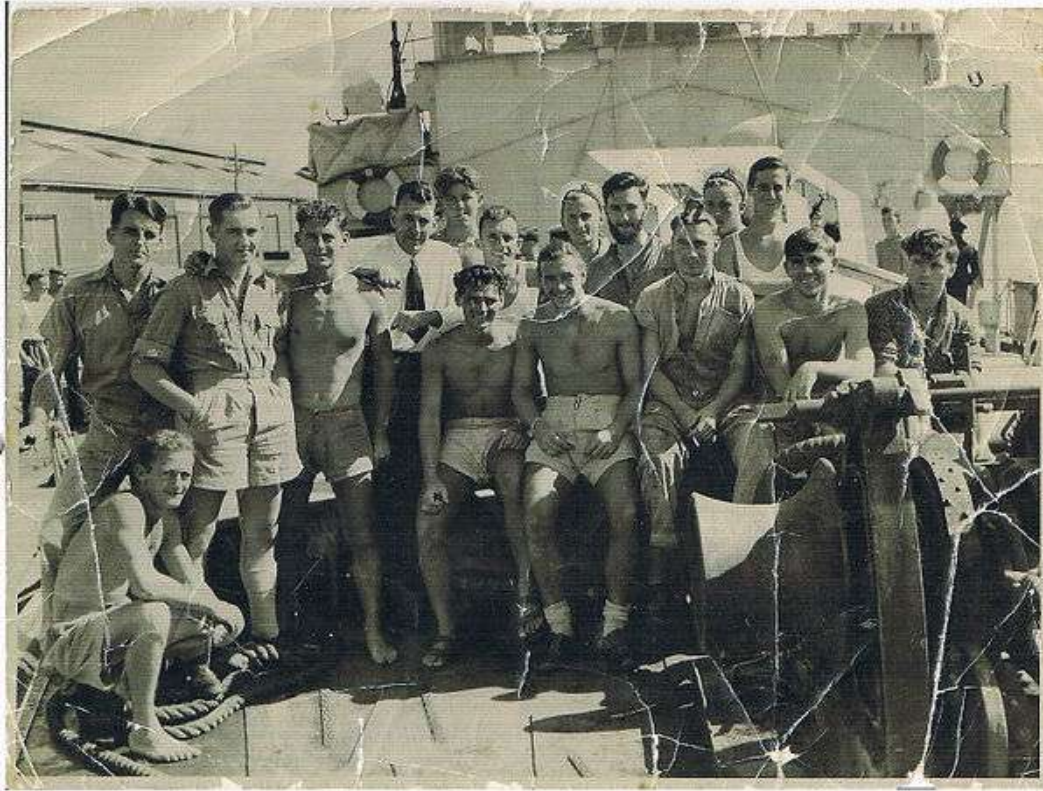
Late on the night of 11 September 1943 the German submarine U-617 was attacked in the western Mediterranean by a Wellington aircraft of 179 Squadron, RAF. The U-boat was seriously damaged, and after fifteen minutes moved off slowly on the surface for the North African coast. In the early hours of 12 September another Wellington from 179 Squadron also attacked and damaged the submarine.

U-617 beached herself on the shore of Spanish Morocco at 2:00am. The crew abandoned ship under gun fire from the requisitioned Dutch trawler *Haarlem*. The corvette HMS *Hyacinth*, with *Wollongong* under her orders, later arrived at the scene and the two ships shelled the U-boat. The destruction of U-617 was officially credited to the two aircraft of 179 Squadron, *Haarlem*, *Hyacinth* and *Wollongong*.



U-617 on fire and lying on her port side after being beached off the Moroccan coast near Melilla. The wreck was eventually destroyed by further air attacks and naval gunfire.

Wollongong returned to home waters when she arrived in Fremantle on 16 May 1944 for a two month refit. On completion of the refit she sailed from Fremantle for further service with the Eastern Fleet. *Wollongong* completed her service with the Eastern Fleet when she returned to Australia in February 1945.



*Crew members at the refit of HMAS Wollongong in Adelaide, 1945 when the four-inch was fitted.
From the Adelaide Advertiser via Anon.*

The concluding months of hostilities were spent chiefly in the Manus area. This included participated in the operation for the capture of Okinawa (Operation ICEBERG) between March and May 1945.

At 11:00 on 9 June 1945, *Wollongong* berthed at Port Kembla to visit her namesake city. Owing to the minimum depth of water at *Wollongong*, and to the regret of the local council, the corvette was unable to berth any closer. The Mayor and Councillors met the ship on arrival and were duly welcomed by the Commanding Officer.

The officers were hosted at a civic reception at the Town Hall, while her ship's company were transported to *Wollongong* to march through the main street to the War Memorial where a wreath was laid. Afterwards they were entertained at a luncheon and into the evening.

In the immediate post war period *Wollongong* proceeded to the Far East and spent a few weeks on anti-piracy patrols followed by a brief period of service at Morotai.

On 11 February 1946 *Wollongong* paid off at Sydney in preparation for transfer to the Royal Netherlands Navy. She had steamed more than a quarter of a million miles during her commission with the Royal Australian Navy.

On 11 February, 1946, *Wollongong*, in Sydney, was transferred to the Royal Navy as HMS *Wollongong*, then temporally to the Royal Netherlands Navy. At arrival in Makassar the ship was rebaptised as HMNS *Banda*.

Just like her sister ships, the Dutch corvette was active as a patrol vessel in Indonesian waters until December 1949. On August the 8th, 1947, HMNS *Banda* captured several proas with rubber. In the struggle following this incident one man was killed aboard the Dutch ship. During Dutch service she carried the Pennant numbers MV22, PK2, P7.



On 6 April 1950 together with the *Ambon*, *Banda* was transferred to the newly established Indonesian navy as KRI *Radjawali*, Pennant Number 254.

Frigates (Corvette Type)
4 "Banteng" Class



1951, Indonesian Navy, Official.

BANTENG (ex-Ambon, ex-Cairns)
HANG TUAH (ex-Morotai, ex-Ipswich)

PATI UNUS (ex-Tidore, ex-Tamworth)
RADJAWALI (ex-Banda, ex-Wollongong)

The KRI *Radjawali* corvette remained in Indonesian service till 1968 after which she was sold on to Hong Kong to be scrapped.

H.M.A.S. WOLLONGONG