

The ABC of  
**Royal Australian Navy Corvettes**



**By Able Seaman Libby Pearce**

# The ABC

OF

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY CORVETTES

BY

Able Seaman Libby Pearce

2019



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# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

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# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

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My Director, Mr John Perryman and work colleague Mr Petar Djokovic have each made valuable contributions and assisted me in the production of this volume. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr Paul Burnett, the Navy Badge Manager, who provided the artwork of the 'as worn' ship's badges that appear with most entries.

I would particularly like to thank maritime artist Mr John Ford for his willingness and enthusiasm to especially produce the original artwork of HMAS *Armidale* (I) that appears on the front cover and Mr Gary Kinkade who produced the final design.

Numerous unknown former RAN corvette men have indirectly contributed through the images taken by them during their service. Many of these images are now held in perpetuity in the RAN History Section in which I was fortunate to find myself working during 2018-2019.

The photography of the late Mr Allan C. Green, whose collection is now part of the State Library of Victoria, is worthy of special mention for both its clarity and presentation of the corvettes he captured on glass plate negatives.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge copyright holders where possible. All other pictures and artwork used are courtesy of the Royal Australian Navy unless otherwise indicated.

Able Seaman Libby Pearce

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Foreword



It seems fitting in 2019, as the Navy and the Nation align to establish a continuous ship building program, that an Able Seaman might compile a book that reminds us of the perils of being unprepared for an emergency, or conflict that might threaten our way of life, or the vital saltwater highways that connect Australia's economy with the rest of the world.

Whether unintentionally or by design, this is exactly what Able Seaman Libby Pearce has achieved in the pages of this book in which she presents in pictures and words, the success story of the Royal Australian Navy's *Bathurst* class corvettes.

Built between 1940 and 1944 by Australian workers, most of whom had never before built ships, and manned chiefly by Royal Australian Naval Reserve personnel called up for active service, the corvettes served with distinction in both hemispheres. Their work was seldom glamorous, but in spite of that, they were to earn an impressive number of campaign awards and battle honours.

The corvettes were also the first class of RAN ships to reach deep into the Australian community and carry the names of the many regional cities and towns from which our Sailors are recruited.

Able Seaman Pearce has worked hard to produce this pictorial volume, which I commend to all with an interest in Australia's naval forces. BZ Libby!

**MJ Noonan, AO**  
Vice Admiral, Royal Australian Navy  
Chief of Navy  
17 June 2019

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



Libby Pearce joined the Royal Australian Navy on 27 June 2011 from Newcastle, NSW, as a General Experience (GX) sailor. Her initial recruit training took place at HMAS *Cerberus* after which she went to sea in the training ship SOV *Windermere*, HMAS *Tobruk* (II) and HMAS *Choules*. She gained further exposure to naval life while posted to HMAS *Albatross* and HMAS *Coonawarra*.

In June 2012 Libby transferred to the Communications and Information Systems (CIS) category graduating from the Defence Force School of Signals Maritime Wing as Dux of her class. She then served at HMAS *Kuttabul* and in HMAS *Diamantina* (II). Promoted Able Seaman in February 2014 she was part of the commissioning crew of the landing helicopter dock (LHD) HMAS *Canberra* (III), which was a career highlight. She has since served at HMAS *Harman*, in communications billets and in the office of the Chief of Navy.

In 2018 Libby joined the Sea Power Centre - Australia working in the Naval History Section administering the RAN's history web pages and online content.



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Introduction

The tradition of naming ships of the Royal Australian Navy's fleet after our nation's cities and towns began when the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Unit was created in the years immediately preceding World War I. When the Australian Fleet Unit first arrived in Sydney on 4 October 1913 it was led into Port Jackson by the flagship HMAS *Australia* (I), followed closely by two brand new cruisers each carrying the name of Australia's largest cities – Melbourne and Sydney. Later, more cruisers were ordered and over time the names of other capital cities were added including Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Perth and Hobart. The citizens of those major cities took much pride in having state-of-the-art Australian warships so named, particularly as most knew someone serving in them. It followed that the exploits and adventures of those men and ships were reported with great enthusiasm and pride by 'hometown' newspapers.

Soon after the outbreak of World War II an order was placed for sixty minesweepers of simple design to be constructed in Australian shipyards as part of the Commonwealth Government's wartime shipbuilding programme. Rapidly produced, these vessels were capable of patrol work, shore bombardment, minesweeping, escort and survey duties, and troop-transport. They became popularly known as corvettes and with so many ships commissioning the Navy turned its attention to regional towns and communities in search of worthy names.

The lead ship of the class was named HMAS *Bathurst* after the town in the central tablelands of NSW and those that followed each took their names from other regional towns dotted around the country. This linkage between the Navy and the Nation forged strong and enduring links between the RAN and the communities it drew upon to crew its fighting ships at a time when Australia never felt more threatened. Altogether 56 *Bathurst* class corvettes saw active service in the RAN during World War II performing valuable work in far-flung theatres in both hemispheres. Four corvettes were built for the Royal Indian Navy. Three corvettes were lost during the war and a fourth in 1947 while clearing mines from the Great Barrier Reef.

Since World War II the names of regional towns and cities have continued to be used in the RAN fleet and many of the names first carried by the *Bathurst* class have reappeared variously as *Fremantle* class patrol boats, *Armidale* class patrol boats, survey motor launches, *Anzac* class frigates and in one instance a commissioned shore establishment. The links between the Navy and the Nation remain strong and in compiling this pictorial book I have selected the best imagery available as a reminder of the RAN's first use of regional names and as a tribute to the service of those who served in the *Bathurst* class corvettes.

Whilst working at the Sea Power Centre – Australia in the Navy History Section as a website administrator, my first job was to update the RAN history webpages for the 56 *Bathurst* class corvettes. Looking at the images and their histories, I developed a great interest for the stories behind these ships. Each ship has different stories to tell and to be able to share these with the current generation of sailors, and those who have and are serving in ships named after corvettes, is a great honour for me. I hope you enjoy their stories as much as I have.

Able Seaman Libby Pearce

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## General Class Specifications

Class	<i>Bathurst</i> Class Australian Mine Sweeper - Corvette
Displacement	733 tons (665 tonnes) - Standard 1025 tons (930 tonnes) - Full War Load
Length	186 feet (56.7 metres)
Beam	31 feet (9.5 metres)
Draught	8 feet 6 inches (2.6 metres)
Propulsion	2 x shafts turned by 2 x triple expansion engines with 2 x Admiralty 3-drum boilers
Power	1750 ihp or 2000 ihp (indicated horse power)
Speed	15 knots
Main Armament*	Typically 1 x 4-inch gun or 1 x 12-pdr gun
Secondary Armament	Most ships equipped with 2-3 x 20 mm Oerlikon guns some later equipped with 1 x 40 mm Bofors
Depth Charges	Most ships equipped with 20-60 stern depth charges/depth charge throwers
Crew	85 (war complement)
Radar	Type A272 (Lantern) & Type A286 (Masthead)
*Note: There were subtle differences in the armament across all ships of the <i>Bathurst</i> class.	

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# A



*HMAS Ararat was named for the city of Ararat in south-western Victoria. This late war image of Ararat taken in Port Philip Bay, Victoria, captures her appearance while part of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla. Note the bold pennant number and numeral '20' painted on her funnel. (Allan C Green collection, State Library of Victoria)*

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*Below: HMAS Ararat was the only RAN corvette to be assigned the letter 'K' flag superior before her pennant number, designating her as a miscellaneous fleet unit. Most of the Bathurst class corvettes adopted the 'J' flag superior identifying them as minesweepers. Later the letter 'M' was used for the same purpose while the letter 'B' was used by those attached to the British Pacific Fleet.*



*Above: On 22 October 1945 Ararat joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla for post-war mine clearance operations. As a minesweeper, she adopted the letter 'M' flag-superior operating firstly in Australian waters before transferring to New Britain, New Ireland and the Solomon Islands.*

*Ararat's battle honours included:*

PACIFIC 1943-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# A



*Named for the city in the northern tablelands of New South Wales, HMAS Armidale was sunk following an overwhelming enemy air attack on 1 December 1942. During that action Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean remained at his post on the ship's aft Oerlikon gun defending his shipmates in the water as the ship sank beneath him. Although he was posthumously Mentioned in Dispatches for his gallantry, many believe his selfless devotion to duty was worthy of a Victoria Cross.*

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*Left: Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean whose bravery in the corvette HMAS Armidale has become synonymous with the Royal Australian Navy values of courage and loyalty. Right: Members of Armidale's crew pose for a photograph while deployed in support of operations in northern Australian waters. HMAS Armidale was awarded the following campaign awards for her service during World War II: DARWIN 1942, PACIFIC 1942, NEW GUINEA 1942.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*Named for the Victorian city on the Yarrowee River situated in the central highlands, HMAS Ballarat steamed over 130,000 miles during her five-year commission in the RAN. Her wartime service saw her operate chiefly in the Pacific theatre.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Right: A sketch of HMAS Ballarat held in the collection of the Naval History Section. During World War Two Ballarat initially wore the pennant number J184, later when she was assigned to the British Pacific Fleet this was altered to B236.*



*Left: HMAS Ballarat in the Alfred Graving Dock at Williamstown Dockyard, Victoria during a refit that saw her equipped with ASDIC.*

*Ballarat's battle honours included:*

PACIFIC 1941-45

NEW GUINEA 1942-44

OKINAWA 1945



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Bathurst undertaking sea trials prior to commissioning. She flies the red ensign from her mainmast indicating that she is still in the hands of the builders and yet to be formally accepted by the RAN. Bathurst was named for the country town in the central tablelands of NSW.*

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*HMAS Bathurst takes to the water for the first time at Cockatoo Island Dockyard on 1 August 1940.*



*HMAS Bathurst's battle honours included:*

INDIAN OCEAN 1942-44

PACIFIC 1945

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Benalla in her early wartime configuration. Benalla differed from her sister corvettes with an additional 'monkey island' fitted above her bridge. Benalla took her name from the small city located on the Broken River in the high country north-eastern region of Victoria.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Below: A ship's nautical clock of the type carried in most of the RAN's Bathurst class corvettes. Accurate time keeping played an important part in managing a ship's routine.*



*Above: On 9 December 1943 Benalla arrived in Sydney for a much needed refit. The 'monkey island' is clearly visible in this picture as is the addition of her A286 radar aerial at the top of her foremast.*

*During World War II Benalla earned the campaign award NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*A fine view of HMAS Bendigo wearing her striking wartime disruptive pattern camouflage paint scheme. Bendigo took her name from the city in Victoria made famous during the 1850s Gold Rush.*

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*The Bathurst class corvettes were capable of performing a broad range of duties.*

*During her commission Bendigo performed minesweeping, patrol, convoy escort and anti-submarine warfare duties.*



*Above: HMAS Bendigo riding at a buoy in Sydney Harbour.*

*Named for the Victorian town of Bendigo she earned the following battle honours and campaign awards during World War II:*

PACIFIC 1942-44

NEW GUINEA 1942-44

OKINAWA 1945

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*A war weary HMAS Bowen in Melbourne, Victoria, following the end of hostilities in the Pacific. (Allan C Green – State Library of Victoria).  
Following her World War II service Bowen was awarded the following campaign awards: PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*

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*HMAS Bowen was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the coastal town situated in the Whitsunday region on the eastern coast of Queensland. In this picture the corvette appears 'as constructed' and is yet to be equipped with radar.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Broome at anchor wearing her late war, two-tone paint scheme. Broome was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the coastal, pearling town located in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.*

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*Right: Broome's officers and ratings on the quarterdeck during minesweeping operations. Corvettes rolled easily in even a moderate swell adding to the inherent dangers of life at sea.*

*Below: Aerial attack was a constant threat to ships operating in the Pacific Theatre and a vigilant lookout was a necessity.*



During her service *HMAS Broome* earned the battle honours:

PACIFIC 1942-45

NEW GUINEA 1942-44

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Bunbury wearing the 'number 20' on her funnel signifying her status as a part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla. Bunbury adopted the name of the port city in Western Australia situated 180 kms south of Perth. (Allan C Green – State Library of Victoria)*

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*HMAS Bunbury steams into Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne (Allan C Green – State Library of Victoria).*

*Following HMAS Bunbury's decommissioning her bell was presented to the City of Bunbury where it may now be seen proudly on display.  
(Image courtesy of the City of Bunbury Council).*

*HMAS Bunbury earned the following battle honours during World War II:*

PACIFIC 1943-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Bundaberg returns to harbour showing the visible effects of long periods at sea on war service. Much of Bundaberg's service was spent performing convoy escort work on the eastern Australian seaboard before being sent north to the New Guinea area of operations.*

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*The Bathurst class corvettes were practical, unsophisticated warships. Mechanical in nature, much of the equipment fitted was common across the class and could be easily maintained by those onboard.*

*Below: Inside a corvette's after steering compartment situated immediately above the ship's rudder and sternpost.*



*HMAS Bundaberg was named for the city situated on the south-east Queensland coast.*

*HMAS Bundaberg's battle honours include:*

PACIFIC 1942-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# B



*HMAS Burnie shortly after commissioning on 5 April 1941. Note the absence of a gun shield on her forward 4-inch gun. During World War II Burnie earned the following campaign awards: INDIAN OCEAN 1942-44, PACIFIC 1942-45 & OKINAWA 1945. (Allan C Green – State Library of Victoria)*

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*HMAS Burnie was laid down at Morts Dock Engineering Company, Balmain, Sydney, NSW, on 4 June 1940. She was launched on 25 October 1940 by Lady King, wife of the Chairman of Directors, Mort's Dock and Engineering Co., Sir George King, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the port city on the north west coast of Tasmania. By the war's end Mort's Dock had constructed fourteen of the sixty Bathurst class corvettes.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

C



*HMAS Cairns was one of a number of RAN corvettes that saw service in the Indo-Pacific during World War II. She also took part in operations in the Mediterranean theatre where she was involved in the invasion of Sicily as part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla.*

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*Above: Crewed by just 85 men, the ship's companies of corvettes were, by nature, close-knit. Here, off-duty ratings from HMAS Cairns pose for a photograph during a lighter moment alongside. Right: HMAS Cairns turns at rest prior to leaving harbour.*

*HMAS Cairns took her name from the coastal city in far north Queensland. She received the following campaign awards for her service during World War II:*

**INDIAN OCEAN 1942-45, PACIFIC 1942-45, SICILY 1943, OKINAWA 1945.**

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

C



*HMAS Castlemaine riding high in the water in Melbourne following the end of wartime hostilities. Castlemaine is now preserved as a museum ship at Williamstown, Victoria, where she is open for public inspection. (Allan C Green – State Library of Victoria)*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Castlemaine takes her name from the small city in Victoria situated in the gold fields region. She saw extensive service during World War II earning the following campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1942-43

DARWIN 1942-43

NEW GUINEA 1942-44

*Above: The compass platform and helm of HMAS Castlemaine. Bridge armour was light in corvettes, offering little in the way of protection from gunfire or shell splinters when in action.*



*Above: The First Lieutenant's cabin in the museum ship HMAS Castlemaine.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

C



*HMAS Cessnock conducting a light-line transfer at sea. These evolutions took place routinely when underway to pass light stores, mail and personnel between ships. Cessnock took her name from the city in the Hunter region of NSW.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*During the Second World War HMAS Cessnock saw service in the Indo-Pacific, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. In recognition of her wartime service she was awarded the following battle honours & campaign awards:*

INDIAN OCEAN 1942-45  
PACIFIC 1942  
NEW GUINEA 1942  
SICILY 1943

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# C



*HMAS Colac was named for the small city in the western district of Victoria and was one of a number of corvettes that saw service in the post-war RAN. Based at Port Melbourne during 1951-52, Colac was home to National Servicemen and members of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve who joined her for sea training.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*HMAS Colac saw extensive service in the New Guinea theatre during World War II and was one of a number of ships that took part in Operation LILLIPUT, the reinforcement, resupply and development of the Buna/Gona area after its capture.*

*Colac received the following campaign awards in recognition of her wartime service:*

*PACIFIC 1942-45*

*NEW GUINEA 1942-44*



*In 1962, having spent 9 years laid up in reserve, Colac's superstructure was removed and the vessel converted to a tank-cleaning ship; a sad end for a ship that had earned Battle Honours for wartime service in the Pacific and New Guinea. After many years of accumulated service, Colac reached the end of her useful life in 1983. She was later sunk by the Oberon class submarine HMAS Ovens in a test firing of a Mk48 torpedo in waters off Jervis Bay in 1987. This picture was taken at the time of that event.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes



*HMAS Cootamundra leaving Port Jackson, Sydney, c. 1954. Following an active wartime commission, during which she steamed 74,609 nautical miles, Cootamundra was retained as a training and survey ship continuing to provide valuable service until 1962.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Above: Engine room personnel working hard to rectify a defect on a main engine bearing.*

*Cootamundra took her name from the town situated in the south-west slopes region of NSW. She was awarded the following campaign awards for her service during World War II:*

**DARWIN 1943 PACIFIC 1943-45 NEW GUINEA 1944**

*Below: Members of Cootamundra's ship's company with clean shaven heads. Corvettes were hot and cramped at the best of times, a situation that was exacerbated when serving in the tropics.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes



*HMAS Cowra is the only RAN warship to have carried the name of the small town situated in the central west of New South Wales. During World War II she saw extensive service in the Pacific and the New Guinea area of operations, mainly in the Morotai region.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Above: HMAS Cowra's ship's company gathered for an official photograph on her foc'sle during World War II. Cowra received campaign awards for PACIFIC 1943-45 & NEW GUINEA 1944.*

*Right: After spending time in reserve following the completion of post-war minesweeping duties, Cowra recommissioned as a training ship for National Service ratings. Here, the mother of one such rating may be seen farewelling her son prior to the ship departing for a training cruise at sea. (State Library of Victoria)*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Crew



*The crew of HMAS Wallaroo assembled on the wharf next to their ship. Corvette crews were small and close-knit, working together in what were often uncomfortable and hazardous circumstances.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Left: Signalmen Harry Edenborough and Graham Collier of HMAS Rockhampton closed up on the 20 inch signalling projector atop Rockhampton's bridge. Above: HMAS Broome's 4-inch gun crew undertaking loading drills on her foc'sle.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# D



*A fine starboard quarter view of HMAS Deloraine conducting builder's acceptance trials at sea in late 1941. In early January 1942 she arrived in Darwin and was soon in action taking part in the destruction of the enemy Japanese submarine I-124 – the first enemy submarine to be sunk in Australian waters. Deloraine was named for the town on the Meander River in the central-north of Tasmania.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*On 19 February 1942 Darwin came under aerial attack from Japanese aircraft. Here Deloraine can be seen dwarfed against the backdrop of the Motor Vessel Neptune exploding spectacularly after receiving a number of direct hits from enemy bombers while unloading ammunition. Deloraine escaped serious damage and later received campaign awards for DARWIN 1942, PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# D



*HMAS Dubbo, named for the town in the Orana region of New South Wales; she saw active service in New Guinea and Solomon Islands waters during the Second World War. Here she can be seen in her late war configuration equipped with radar and wearing a disruptive camouflage paint scheme.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Sailors assist soldiers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division from the port waist of Dubbo into landing craft during operations in New Guinea. Note the perforated steel smoke generators visible in this picture. These were used to generate a dense smoke screen as a defensive measure when under attack. Dubbo worked closely with men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF 6<sup>th</sup> Division during the drive against Wewak in May 1945. She received the campaign award PACIFIC 1942-45.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# E



*HMAS Echuca was named for the northern Victorian town adjacent to the Murray River. She commissioned on 7 September 1942 and saw active service during World War II receiving campaign awards for PACIFIC 1942-44 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44. Here, Echuca can be seen flying her paying-off pendant at the end of her commission in June 1948.*

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*Above: Disruptive pattern camouflage was applied variously to the RAN's corvettes during World War II and no two ships seemed to adopt the same pattern. Here, HMAS Echuca can be seen painted in what is sometimes described as a 'dazzle' paint scheme. The absence of radar aerials suggests this picture was taken prior to 1944. Echuca ended the war performing valuable survey work in northern Australian waters and was later transferred to the Royal New Zealand Navy.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# F



*HMAS Fremantle was built by Evans Deakin & Co Ltd in Brisbane and launched by Mrs Elsie Curtin, the wife of the then Prime Minister, Mr John Curtin. She was the first RAN warship to carry the name Fremantle and following service during World War II was based in her namesake port as a training ship.*

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*Below: HMAS Fremantle returning to port in the closing stages of World War II. Note the addition of the cylindrical housing above the bridge, often referred to as the 'lantern', which housed the type A272 surface search radar. Nestled beneath it can be seen the ship's 20-inch signalling projector/searchlight.*

*Fremantle's campaign awards included:*

*DARWIN 1943 & PACIFIC 1943-45.*



*Above: HMAS Fremantle laid up in reserve following the end of wartime hostilities. She wears the pennant number M246, indicative of her service with the 21<sup>st</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla in Hong Kong during 1945. The tug Mollymawk can be seen nested outboard.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*HMAS Gawler was named after the South Australian town of the same name. She commissioned at Whyalla, South Australia, on 14 August 1942 and saw extensive wartime service in the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean theatre.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Gawler was very much a South Australian ship; she was built by Broken Hill Pty Ltd at Whyalla, her engines were supplied by Perry Engineering Co. of Adelaide and, following her launching, the people of Gawler took an avid interest in her wartime exploits.*

*Following the cessation of hostilities in 1945 Gawler made a final visit to Port Adelaide where her crew was feted as they marched through the city streets.*

*HMAS Gawler's World War II service saw her awarded the following battle honours and campaign awards:*

INDIAN OCEAN 1943-45

PACIFIC 1942

SICILY 1943

*Left: Gawler takes to the water for the first time on 4 October 1941. Lady Ruby Dugan, the wife of the then Governor of Victoria, performed the launching duties. Lady Dugan also launched HMAS Geelong, earning the distinction of being the only woman to launch two RAN corvettes.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



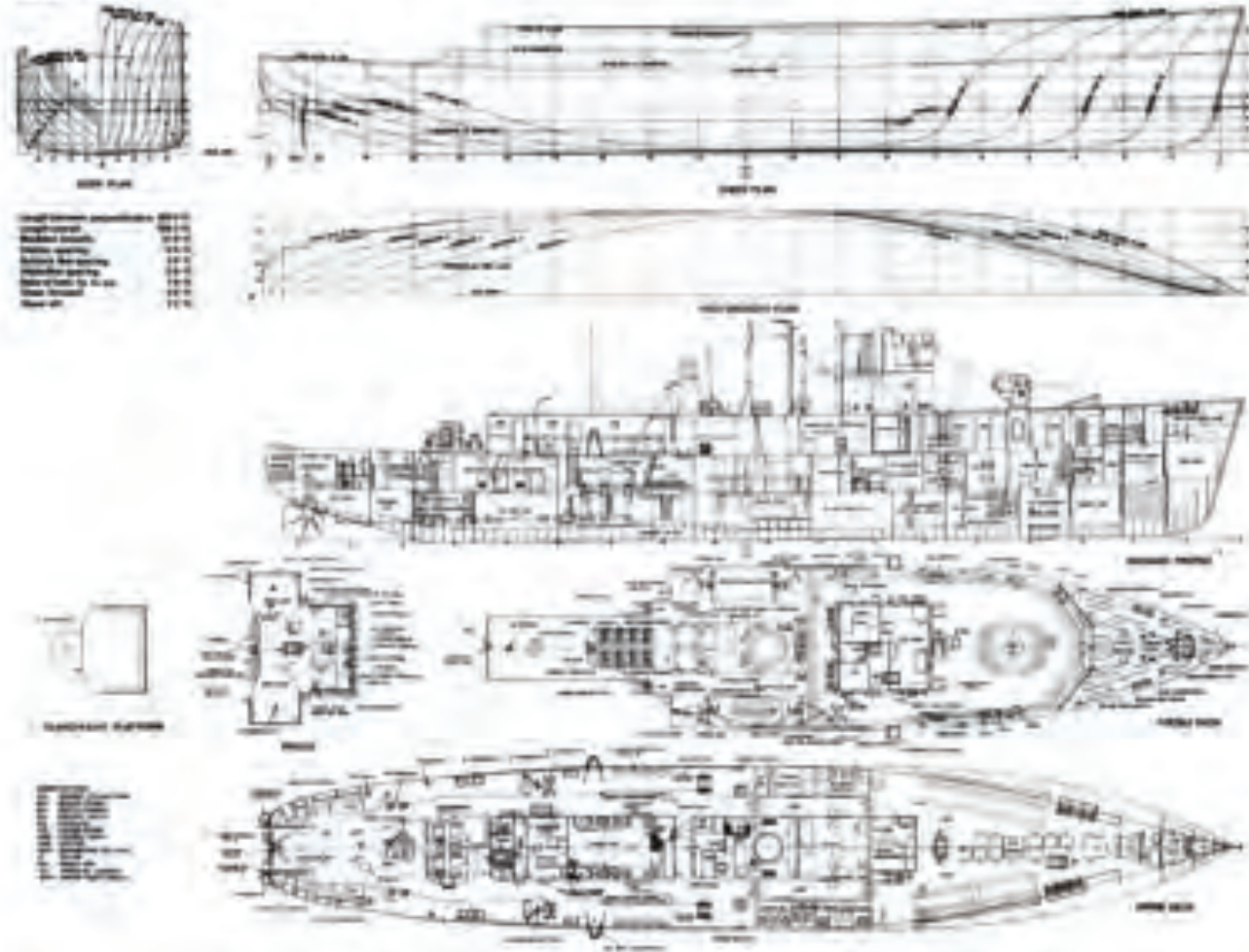
*HMAS Geelong at sea c.1944 prior to her being sunk through collision with the 10,450 ton US tanker York, some 30 miles off Langemak, New Guinea, on the evening of 18 October 1944. She was the first RAN warship to be named for the city of Geelong, Victoria, and received campaign awards for PACIFIC 1942-44 & NEW GUINEA 1944.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



### H.M.A.S. GEELONG

SHEET 1 - PLAN, DECK AND MOUNTING PEOPLE  
SCALE - 1 inch = 8 feet 10 in



Above: A general arrangement plan for HMAS Geelong as she appeared when built and prior to being equipped with Type A272 & A286P radar in April 1944. Her original 4-inch B.L. Mk IX gun was also updated in 1944 and replaced with a Mk XIX QF 4-inch variant. (Image courtesy Webb Warships)

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*HMAS Geraldton at anchor in Sydney c.1945. Named for the Western Australian port town of Geraldton, she initially saw service on the East Indies station where she was employed on patrol and escort duties. In November 1944 she joined the British Pacific Fleet adopting the 'B' pennant number prefix as can be seen in the above image.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Geraldton berthed alongside with two of her sister corvettes visible in the background. Note the subtle differences in appearance between these ships, all of which have undergone improvements to their original design. Geraldton was awarded campaign awards for PACIFIC 1942, INDIAN OCEAN 1942-45 & SICILY 1943.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*HMAS Gladstone was named for the Queensland coastal town situated to the north of Brisbane. Fittingly, the corvette was built by Walkers, Ltd. of Maryborough, Queensland, further cementing her as a Queensland ship. Here she can be seen in her late war configuration.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Right: HMAS Gladstone secured alongside the wharf adjacent to the Seamanship School, HMAS Cerberus.*

*During World War II Gladstone saw active service in the Pacific and in the New Guinea area of operations. She received the following campaign awards: PACIFIC 1943-45, NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*

*In June 1956 Gladstone was paid off and sold to the Port Phillip Sea Pilots Association. Renamed Akuna, she became a familiar sight in Port Phillip Bay in her new role as a pilot vessel.*



*Left: Trainees repair on board Gladstone with their kit bags over their shoulders. For ten years Gladstone was home to hundreds of trainees while based at the RAN's premier training establishment, HMAS Cerberus, Victoria.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*A fine study of HMAS Glenelg entering Port Phillip Bay. Glenelg was named for the beachside suburb of the South Australian capital, Adelaide. Her World War II service resulted in the award of the PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44 campaign awards. (Allan C Green State Library of Victoria)*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Glenelg showing the effects of continuous war service in the tropics. Here she can be seen undergoing much needed maintenance, possibly at Williamstown, Victoria. Note the appearance of both the Type A272 and A286P radar aerials.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*The corvette HMAS Goulburn remains the only RAN ship to have carried the name of Australia's first inland city. Here she can be seen mooring to a buoy in Sydney Harbour c.1941 before departing for active service in South East Asia.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Left: HMAS Goulburn takes to the water for the first time on 16 November 1940.*

*Above: Built at Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney, she was quickly fitted out and commissioned in the RAN on 28 February 1941. Overall it took just six months to complete Goulburn from the time her keel was laid to the time of her entering service.*

*Goulburn had an active wartime career earning the following battle honours & campaign awards: PACIFIC 1942-44, NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

G



*HMAS Gympie was named after the town situated in the Wide Bay-Burnett district of Queensland. She commissioned in the RAN on 4 November 1942 beginning an active wartime commission conducting convoy escort duties off Australia's north-eastern coast.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*Right: HMAS Gympie at sea c.1944 following a refit that included the addition of radar. For the next 12 months she conducted anti-submarine patrols and convoy escort work that included service in the Solomon Sea.*

*HMAS Gympie's service during the Second World War saw her awarded the following battle honours and campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1943-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44



*Left: The ship's company of HMAS Gympie gather on her foremast for an official portrait.*

*Those who served in the RAN's corvettes took considerable pride in being 'corvette men' forming an active association following the end of World War II that continued the fellowship and shared experience of those who had served.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# H



*HMAS Horsham was named for the town in the Wimmera region of western Victoria. She can be seen here wearing her distinctive late war disruptive pattern camouflage paint scheme. Her duties ranged from anti-submarine patrol work in the south-west of Australia to survey duties in the north.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Horsham (nearest camera) laid up with a sister corvette following the end of World War II. As rapidly as these small workhorses were brought into service so too were they taken out of service as 'hostility only' officers and ratings returned home to their civilian occupations and the Navy gradually resumed peacetime operations. Throughout the war Horsham provided valuable service on the Australia Station and she was present at the Japanese surrender at Koepang on 11 September 1945.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# I



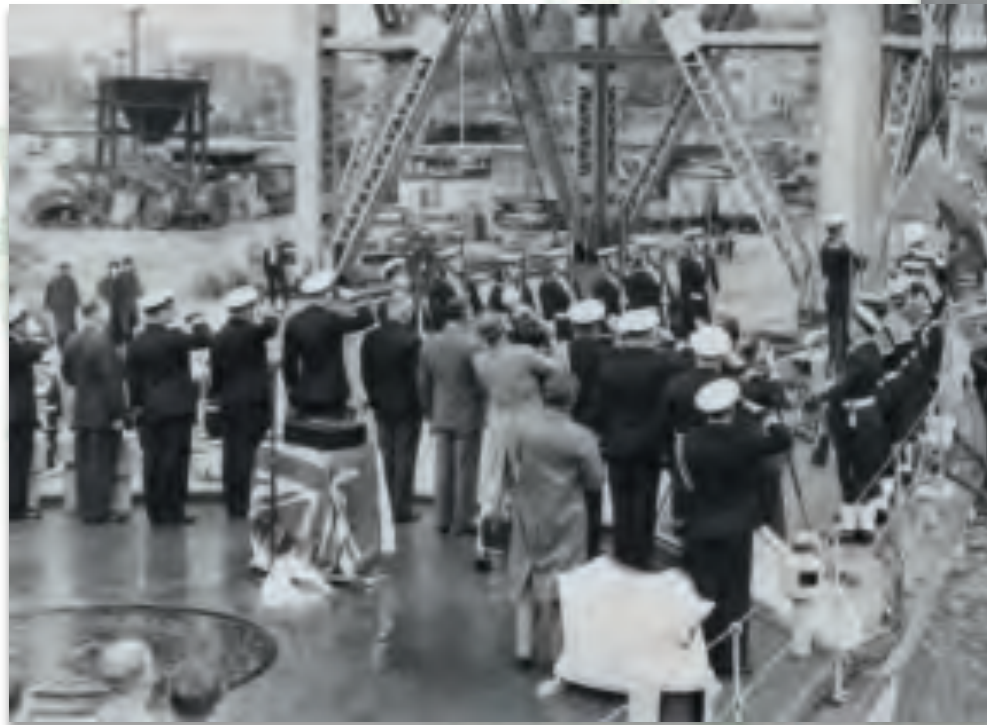
*HMAS Inverell at sea in a heavy swell. The Bathurst class corvettes were known to 'roll on wet grass' and for many young sailors their first experience of life at sea in these small ships was not a pleasant one. HMAS Inverell was named for the town in the New England region of New South Wales.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*During World War II HMAS Inverell earned the following battle honours & campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1942-45

DARWIN 1943

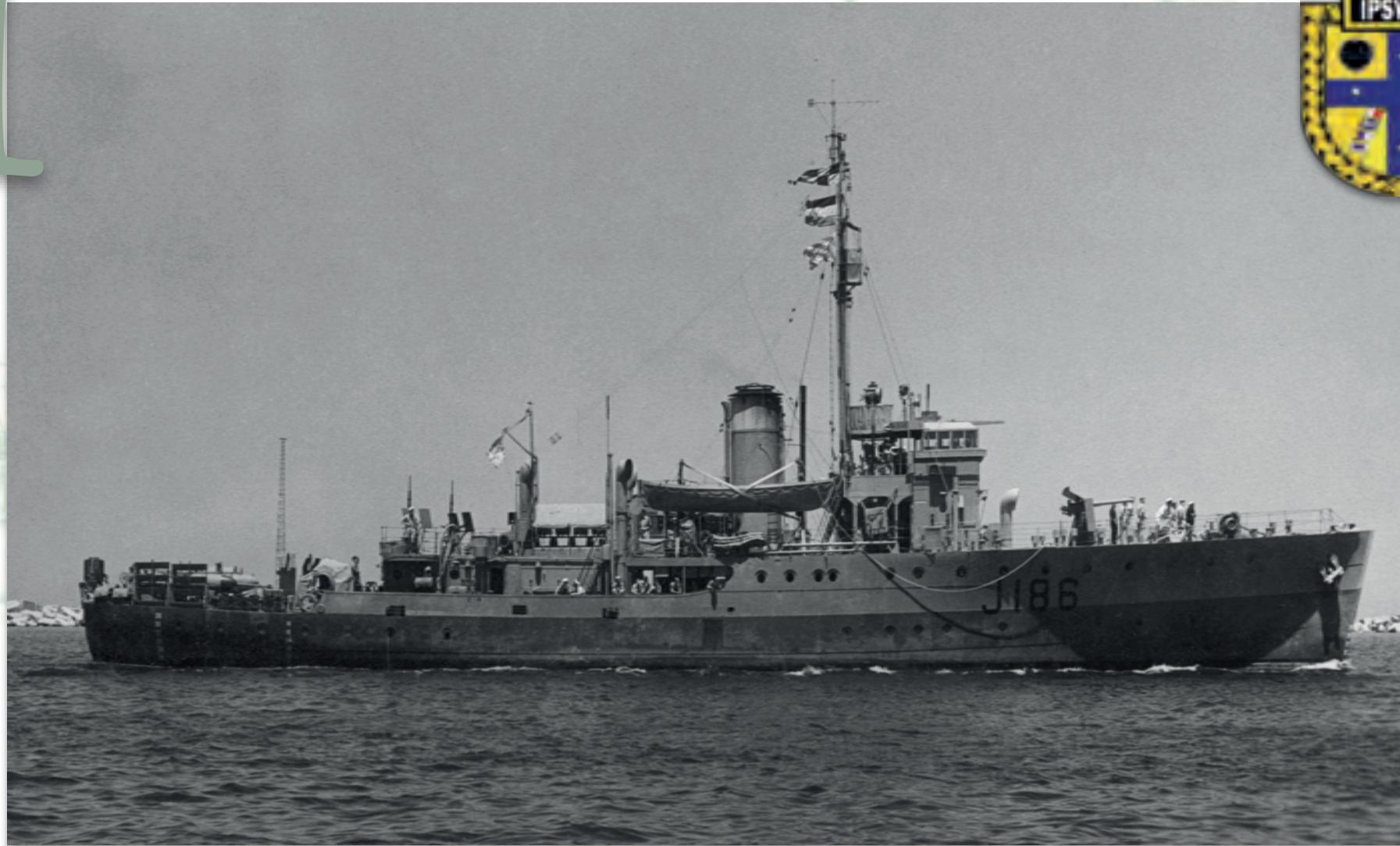


*Right & Above: On 5 March 1952 Inverell was formally presented to the Royal New Zealand Navy in a ceremony conducted in Sydney. She later commissioned as HMNZS Inverell on 10 April 1952. Following a period in reserve status, Inverell served as a training ship based in Auckland before decommissioning for the final time on 19 August 1976.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

I



*A fine profile of HMAS Ipswich highlighting the simple design of the Bathurst class corvettes. Named for the city of Ipswich in southeast Queensland, she saw active service during World War II in the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean theatres.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*For her service during World War II HMAS Ipswich was awarded the following campaign awards and battle honours:*

EAST INDIES 1944  
INDIAN OCEAN 1942-45  
PACIFIC 1942  
SICILY 1943  
OKINAWA 1945



*Two water colours painted by Lieutenant Commander JS McBryde, RANR (S), the commissioning commanding officer of Ipswich. During long periods at sea and away from home many sailors turned their hand to painting, drawing and model making to while away their time during quiet periods between operations.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes



*HMAS Junee was named for the small town situated in the Riverina district of New South Wales. Junee was the 59<sup>th</sup> corvette to be built in Australia during World War II at the end of a highly successful continuous shipbuilding programme.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*During World War II Junee saw active service in the Pacific and in waters surrounding New Guinea.*

*Following the Japanese surrender in September 1945, Junee joined her sister ships Glenelg, Cootamundra and Latrobe to repatriate former prisoners-of-war from Ambon to Morotai.*

*Junee received the following campaign award for her service during World War II:*

PACIFIC 1944-45



*Above: Looking down on the forecastle of Junee and one of her sister ships. Armament was light and there was little in the way of protection for exposed guns crews. Left: HMAS Junee at sea in her post-war role as a training ship.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# K



*HMAS Kalgoorlie on the slipway at BHP's Whyalla shipyard in South Australia. She is dressed overall with signal flags and pennants on the occasion of her launching on 7 August 1941. Kalgoorlie was the first ship of the RAN to carry the name of the city in the Goldfields-Esperance region of Western Australia.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Right and Below: Two fine images of HMAS Kalgoorlie in her early war configuration. During World War II Kalgoorlie searched for, and rescued, the survivors from her sister ship HMAS Armidale after she was sunk by enemy action in the Timor Sea.*



*Following an active commission during World War II HMAS Kalgoorlie was awarded the following campaign awards and battle honours:*

PACIFIC 1942-43

DARWIN 1942-43

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

OKINAWA 1945

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# K



*A weather beaten and war weary HMAS Kapunda riding at a buoy in Sydney Harbour during World War II. Named for the town on the Light River near the Barossa Valley in South Australia, she saw extensive service in the Pacific and New Guinea waters during World War II.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Kapunda at anchor in New Guinea waters c. November 1944. Kapunda saw her fair share of action during World War II coming under enemy attack on several occasions. She earned the battle honours PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# K



*HMAS Katoomba had an active commission in the RAN during World War II and was lucky to escape serious damage during the first of the Japanese air raids on Darwin in February 1942. She is seen here at the end of the war while part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Katoomba nestled in floating dock AD1001 in Darwin Harbour during the first of the Japanese air raids on the port, 19 February 1942. Katoomba was the first RAN ship to carry the name of the chief town of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. She was awarded the following battle honours in recognition of her service during World War II: PACIFIC 1942-45, DARWIN 1942 & NEW GUINEA 1942-44.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# K



*Commissioned on 26 January 1944, HMAS Kiama began her operational wartime career in March that year when she arrived at Milne Bay for service in New Guinea waters. Kiama was named for the coastal town that is famous for its Blowhole, situated to the south of Sydney.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*During World War II HMAS Kiama operated chiefly in the Pacific and in waters surrounding New Guinea and New Britain earning the following battle honours:*

PACIFIC 1944-45

NEW GUINEA 1944



*Above: HMAS Kiama in her late wartime configuration. Note the addition of the 'lantern' radar housing above the bridge and the A286 radar aerial atop her foremast. Left: In 1952 Kiama was presented to the New Zealand Government commissioning in the Royal New Zealand Navy as HMNZS Kiama. Here she can be seen in heavy weather in her post war configuration.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

L



*Named for the town of the same name in northern Tasmania, HMAS Latrobe saw extensive service during World War II between 1942 and 1945. During that time she came under aerial attack on several occasions and was fortunate to escape serious damage.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*Following her World War II, service HMAS Latrobe was awarded the following campaign awards and battle honours:*

PACIFIC 1942-45

DARWIN 1943

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

BORNEO 1945



*Above: HMAS Latrobe wearing the M234 pennant number categorising her as a post-war minesweeper. In that configuration she performed valuable work as a training ship based at the RAN's premier training establishment, HMAS Cerberus, Westernport, Victoria. Left: Continuous sea time and service in the tropics saw most of the RAN's corvettes undergo refits during the war. Here, Latrobe can be seen following a period of maintenance, afloat and ready to leave the dry dock.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# I



*HMAS Launceston was the first RAN ship to carry the name of the northern Tasmanian riverside city. Here she can be seen in her late war paint scheme and equipped with her radar 'lantern' atop the bridge. Launceston commissioned at Brisbane on 9 April 1942.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Above: Two interesting views of HMAS Launceston revealing her sensors and upper-deck fittings. Launceston provided valuable service to the RAN during World War II earning the following campaign awards: EAST INDIES 1944, INDIAN OCEAN 1942-44, PACIFIC 1942-45, OKINAWA 1945.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

I



*Above: A fine portrait of the ship's company of HMAS Lismore. Crewed by 85 men, conditions in corvettes were cramped and difficult at the best of times especially when operating in the tropics. Lismore was named for the city of the same name in north-eastern New South Wales.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Lismore's bridge superstructure differed from other vessels of the class with the addition of a 'monkey island' above the bridge. During World War II she saw extensive service in the Indo-Pacific, Mediterranean Sea and in waters off Okinawa in 1945. She was awarded the following campaign awards: INDIAN OCEAN 1941-44, SICILY 1943, PACIFIC 1945 & OKINAWA 1945.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

L



*HMAS Lithgow, her decks crowded with troops, wearing her wartime disruptive camouflage paint scheme. Lithgow saw extensive service in and around New Guinea in support of military operations at Langemak, Hollandia, Madang, Wakde, Biak, Morotai, Noemfoor and Mios Woendi.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Above: Lithgow in her late war configuration entering harbour. Named for the town of the same name in the central tablelands of New South Wales, Lithgow was awarded the following battle honours and campaign awards for her service during World War II:*

*PACIFIC 1941-45 DARWIN 1942 NEW GUINEA 1942-44.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

M



*HMAS Maryborough was built by the Walkers Yard at Maryborough in Queensland, the town after which she was named. Here she can be seen wearing her early war camouflage paint scheme that very effectively breaks up the silhouette of the ship. Note the distinctive bridge superstructure that differed from many of her sister corvettes.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Maryborough had a very active commission in the RAN during World War II seeing service in the Indo-Pacific and Mediterranean Sea where she took part in the Sicily campaign. Following World War II she was awarded the following campaign awards and battle honours:*

INDIAN OCEAN 1942-44

PACIFIC 1942

SICILY 1943



*Above: Maryborough on the slipway at the Walkers Yard in her namesake town. Left: Commander GL Cant, RAN, with the ship's company of Maryborough in Alexandria, Egypt, 1943. Unlike most of her sister corvettes Maryborough had an open bridge covered only by an awning that was rigged as necessary to provide protection from the elements.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

M



*HMAS Mildura at rest in Sydney Harbour. She is not yet equipped with radar aerials suggesting that this image was taken prior to her 1944 refit. Mildura was named for the Murray River town of the same name situated in northwest Victoria.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Known as 'maids of all work' the corvettes became a common sight in most Australian ports. Here Mildura can be seen in Sydney Harbour with the bow of one of her sister ships in the foreground. Mildura was awarded the campaign awards PACIFIC 1941-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44 for service during World War II.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Museum ships

M



*Two former Royal Australian Navy Bathurst class corvettes have been preserved as museum ships. Here, the former HMAS Whyalla can be seen 'high and dry' in her namesake town in South Australia. Following World War II she was sold and served for many years as the lighthouse tender Rip before being secured as a centrepiece for the Whyalla Maritime Museum.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



Left: The former HMAS Castlemaine now preserved as a museum ship at Williamstown, Victoria. Above: Castlemaine has been lovingly restored to her wartime configuration by a team of dedicated volunteers. Most areas of the ship are open for inspection including the engineering spaces as can be seen here.

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Navigation

n



*Above: The helmsman's position situated mid-ships within the bridge of the museum ship HMAS Castlemaine. Safe and efficient navigation was an essential part of every day life on the bridge of a corvette where the 'Mark 1 eyeball' played an important role in the absence of more sophisticated navigational aids.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*The Bathurst class corvettes were mechanical in nature. As the war progressed most underwent refits that saw the installation of radar that aided considerably in ensuring safe passage and early detection of potential enemies. Orders were passed verbally to those on the bridge while orders to the engine rooms were passed using a network of voice pipes installed throughout the ship. Several of these may be seen in the accompanying images of the bridge of the museum ship HMAS Castlemaine now on display at Williamstown, Victoria.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Officers



*Above: Commander GL Cant, RAN, an experienced officer appointed in command of HMAS Maryborough during World War II. Cant saw extensive service in the Indo-Pacific as evidenced by his induction into the Globe Trotters Club, Ceylon. Souvenirs of wartime service were popular amongst officers and ratings.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Right: A fine portrait of Lieutenant Commander HF Goodwin, RANVR, one of the wartime commanding officers of HMAS Toowoomba. Note the 'wavy navy' lace on the cuffs of his jacket distinguishing him as a commissioned officer in the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve. Above: Many officers and ratings of the reserve forces saw service during World War II in Bathurst class corvettes. Here a sub-lieutenant and two ratings pose for a photograph on board HMAS Shepparton. Working in the tropics saw a much more practical approach to uniform adopted as can be seen here.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

P



*HMAS Parkes in the Brisbane River shortly after commissioning in May 1944. She is already equipped with radar and would soon find herself operating in waters in and around New Guinea and Timor. She was awarded the campaign awards PACIFIC 1944 & NEW GUINEA 1944 for her service during World War II.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*The former HMAS Parkes (M361) laid up in reserve awaiting disposal with her sister ships Glenelg (M236) and Katoomba (M204) in Careening Bay, Western Australia. Most of the former corvettes were sold after the war with many being broken up for scrap metal.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

P



*HMAS Pirie wearing her British Pacific Fleet 'B' pennant number and paint scheme c. 1946. Pirie was the first RAN ship to carry the name of Port Pirie situated in South Australia.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Left: HMAS Pirie takes to the water for the first time following her launching ceremony conducted at Whyalla, South Australia. After commissioning on 10 October 1942 the corvette saw active service in the Pacific, New Guinea and in waters surrounding Okinawa.*

*HMAS Pirie was awarded the following campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1942-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

OKINAWA 1945

*Right: A piece of HMAS Pirie's decking removed from the ship after being attacked by enemy aircraft off Oro Bay, New Guinea, on 11 April 1943. The corvette experienced six very close near misses and one direct hit which penetrated the canopy over the bridge killing instantly the ship's gunnery officer and six ratings on the forward upper deck. Fighting back, the corvette's gun crews brought down one enemy aircraft with close range weapons.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Quarterdeck

Q



*A view of the quarterdecks of HMA Ships Junee and Fremantle. The quarterdeck of a corvette was where much of the day-to-day work took place. It was there that the depth charges were situated as well as mine sweeping equipment, smoke generators and slew-arm davits.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Above: The quarterdeck of HMAS Broome photographed in a heavy swell. In sea states such as this life in corvettes was never pleasant.*

*Left: Former prisoners of war are embarked across the quarterdeck of HMAS Junee. Many of the corvettes undertook such work as part of the Allied occupation forces in the Pacific theatre.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# R



*Above: HMAS Rockhampton while serving as part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Minesweeping Flotilla c. November 1945. Named for the city of Rockhampton, Queensland, she saw active service in the Pacific and in waters surrounding New Guinea during World War II.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce

*Right: During 1944 HMAS Rockhampton operated in New Guinea waters escorting convoys to Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Langemak, Hollandia and Morotai. Following the end of hostilities she took part in the transport of occupation forces to Menado in the Celebes returning with Dutch and Indonesian internees to Morotai. In recognition of her wartime service HMAS Rockhampton was awarded the following campaign awards and battle honours:*

NEW GUINEA 1944

PACIFIC 1942-45



*Left: HMAS Rockhampton was laid down on 6 November 1940 at the Walkers Yard, Maryborough, Queensland. Here she can be seen under construction prior to her launching that took place on 26 June 1941.*

*Altogether, seven of the Bathurst class corvettes were built by the Walkers Yard with each ship costing approximately £250,000 to build or roughly \$18 Million in 2019.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes



*HMAS Shepparton was another of the Bathurst class corvettes modified to include a 'monkey island' atop the bridge. This may have been in connection with the survey duties she undertook prior to the US landings at Humboldt Bay, Tanamarah Bay and Aitape in New Guinea in 1944.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Shepparton was named for the city of Shepparton situated on the floodplain of the Goulburn River in northern Victoria. Here she can be seen in New Guinea waters most likely during survey operations. This type of work was another activity that corvettes undertook in addition to patrol duties, convoy escort work, shore bombardment and minesweeping operations. Shepparton received the following campaign awards: PACIFIC 1943, NEW GUINEA 1943-44.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

S



*HMAS Stawell took her name from the town of Stawell situated in the Wimmera region of Victoria. She had an active commission during World War II serving in the Pacific, and in waters in and around New Guinea and Borneo where she took part in a number of shore bombardments.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Right: HMAS Stawell on patrol in tropical waters while supporting Allied amphibious forces.*



*HMAS Stawell was built at Williamstown, Victoria and launched by Mrs Dedman, wife of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr John Dedman, on 3 April 1943. Stawell saw extensive service in the tropics during World War II earning the following campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1943-45

NEW GUINEA 1943-44

BORNEO 1945

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# S



*HMAS Strahan commissioned in the RAN on 14 March 1944 serving initially with the US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the south-west Pacific. She was named for the small town and former port of Strahan situated on the west coast of Tasmania. In spite of her late commissioning she had an active wartime career initially in New Guinea waters followed by service at Morotai, Borneo and Hong Kong where she struck a mine and was damaged.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



# H.M.A.S. STRAHAN

*Above: HMAS Strahan at sea c.1944. Her mine sweeping equipment can be seen secured at the rear of her quarterdeck. Even the most reluctant sailor usually kept their ship's cap ribbon as a souvenir of their service. These 'tallies' were neatly tied around a junior rating's cap and worn as a symbol of pride and identification. Strahan was awarded the following campaign awards: PACIFIC 1944-45, NEW GUINEA 1944.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

T



*A gleaming HMAS Tamworth leaving port. This late war image sees her wearing a 'B' pennant number denoting her attachment to the British Pacific Fleet. Named for the New South Wales city of Tamworth, she commissioned on 8 August 1942 and saw active service in the Indo-Pacific.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Tamworth wearing her early wartime disruptive camouflage paint scheme and J181 pennant number. She was to spend the early part of her commission attached to the British Eastern Fleet operating from Colombo. At the war's end Tamworth was operating from Hong Kong conducting mine sweeping duties and anti-piracy patrols. She was awarded the INDIAN OCEAN 1943-44 & PACIFIC 1942-45 campaign awards in recognition of her service during World War II.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

T



*HMAS Toowoomba was built at the Walker's Yard, Maryborough, Queensland. She was named for the city of Toowoomba in the Darling Downs region of Queensland. Here she can be seen with a very early version of the 'lantern' radar housing fitted above her bridge.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Left: HMAS Toowoomba takes to the water for the first time on 26 March 1941. She would steam over 100,000 nautical miles during her wartime service that saw her awarded the campaign awards:*

INDIAN OCEAN 1942-44

PACIFIC 1942

*Below: Toowoomba leaves port for the first time flying the 'Red Ensign' as is the custom prior to a ship being accepted from the builders and commissioning in the RAN. Only after commissioning is the naval 'White Ensign' flown throughout the service life of the ship concerned.*





# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

T



*HMAS Townsville commissioned in the RAN on 19 December 1941 and was named for the coastal city in north-east Queensland. She was another of the RAN corvettes that was fortunate to escape damage during the first Japanese air raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Townsville secured to a buoy with her distinctive bow camouflage visible. During World War II she steamed over 155,000 miles earning campaign awards for DARWIN 1942, PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1944.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

Under tow

U



*Good seamanship skills were at the centre of most operations that the RAN's corvettes undertook during World War II. Towing was one of those evolutions and wartime conditions saw many ships in need of such assistance. Sometimes this was due to mechanical failure while on other occasions it was the result of battle damage. Here, the men of HMAS Broome rig a towing hawser to a stricken merchant ship.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*An officer and ratings monitoring a towing hawser rigged on the quarterdeck of HMAS Broome. Although powered only by a triple expansion steam engine, the Bathurst class corvettes were capable of attaining a top speed of 15 knots.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

Victory



*The crew of HMAS Ballarat celebrate Victory at Yokosuka Naval Base in August 1945. Ballarat was later joined by her sisters Pirie, Cessnock and Ipswich, each of which were present in Tokyo Bay for the signing of Imperial Japan's surrender on 2 September 1945. Many of the corvette men were 'hostilities only' officers and ratings, and for them, the end of the war meant that they would soon be going home.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



Throughout the Pacific numerous RAN ships were involved in accepting Japanese surrenders following the cessation of hostilities. Souvenirs of those events were treasured by the men who were present, as can be seen by the ephemera collected by 18 year-old Ordinary Seaman Gilbert Wahlquist of HMAS Rockhampton.

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# W



*HMAS Wagga against the backdrop of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in her post-war configuration as a training ship. Named for the city of Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, she enjoyed a long and active commission in the RAN during war and peace before decommissioning in October 1960.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*During World War II HMAS Wagga earned the campaign awards PACIFIC 1943-45 & NEW GUINEA 1943-44. She was particularly active in the New Guinea theatre of operations conducting anti-submarine patrols, escorting convoys, ferrying troops, bombarding enemy positions and assisting in various landings. Following the cessation of hostilities she joined a number of her sister corvettes in Hong Kong where she was employed clearing enemy mines. In this fine image, Wagga can be seen in Melbourne in 1945 preparing to pay off into Reserve. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# W



*The ship's company of HMAS Wallaroo crowd her decks. Named for the port town of Wallaroo on the western side of South Australia's Yorke Peninsula, she was destined to have a short commission in the RAN coming to grief on 11 June 1943 following a collision with a US Liberty ship.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*Above: A fine picture of the ill-fated Wallaroo. Here she can be seen painted in her disruptive camouflage paint scheme. Although her service was brief (less than a year) she provided a valuable contribution to the war effort earning the campaign award PACIFIC 1942. Three of Wallaroo's crew were killed in the collision that resulted in her sinking.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# W



*HMAS Warrnambool leaving Sydney to undertake sea acceptance trials c. 1941. Named for the Victorian city situated on the Great Ocean Road, Warrnambool saw service in the Pacific and in New Guinea waters during World War II. She was sunk while clearing mines on the Great Barrier Reef on 13 September 1947. Four of her ship's company were killed. The campaign awards DARWIN 1942, PACIFIC 1942-45 & NEW GUINEA 1942 were awarded to the ship in recognition of her service.*

Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Warrnambool, her foremast down, abandoned and sinking after striking a mine during sweeping operations on 13 September 1947. Operations by Navy divers in May 1948 recovered a number of items from the wreck including the ship's bell, which is now on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# W



*HMAS Whyalla was named for the South Australian town of the same name and built there by workers at the BHP Shipyard. She was launched by Lady Barclay-Harvey, the wife of the then Governor of South Australia, and commissioned in the RAN on 8 January 1942. Today she is preserved as a museum ship in her namesake town – a true native of South Australia.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*HMAS Whyalla saw extensive service throughout World War II earning the following campaign awards:*

PACIFIC 1942-45

NEW GUINEA 1942-44

OKINAWA 1945

*Right: Whyalla sporting her British Pacific Fleet 'B' pennant number and dressed overall on the occasion of her return to Whyalla following the end of World War II.*

*On 16 May 1946 Whyalla was sold to the Victorian Public Works Department and fitted out as a lights and maintenance ship for the Victorian Ports and Harbours Department. In that role she continued to provide valuable service as the Rip until 1984 when she was purchased by the Whyalla City Council to be the centrepiece of the Whyalla Maritime Museum.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# W



*HMAS Wollongong at sea undertaking speed trials. Built at Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney, she was named for the New South Wales coastal city of Wollongong. She adopted as her ship's badge a boxing kangaroo, a caricature later made famous in 1983 when the crew of the 12-metre yacht Australia II adopted a similar motif during their successful America's Cup challenge.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*HMAS Wollongong's World War II service was impressive earning her the following campaign awards:*

MEDITERRANEAN 1943

EAST INDIES 1943

INDIAN OCEAN 1942-45

PACIFIC 1942-45

SICILY 1943

OKINAWA 1945

*Wollongong paid off at Sydney on 11 February 1946 having steamed over a quarter of a million miles on war service.*



# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# X

## Explosives



*The crew of HMAS Castlemaine manually reload a depth charge thrower. Time was of the essence between depth charge attacks and the speed at which a weapon could be reloaded could often make the difference between destroying a contact and it getting away.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*The aftermath of the release of a pattern of depth charges. The RAN corvettes Deloraine, Lithgow and Toowoomba were each credited with the destruction of the Japanese submarine I-124 in waters off Darwin in January 1942 following a series of well coordinated depth charge attacks.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

# Y

## Yardarms



*Situated on the front of the foremast beneath the main yardarms was the ship's 'crow's nest' where a rating was normally posted as a lookout. Above him can be seen the type A286 radar aerial that was progressively fitted to the corvettes during wartime refits.*

**Able Seaman Libby Pearce**



*Left: Working aloft to maintain rigging and wires, supporting the mast and yardarms was a routine part of shipboard life. Right: Looking aft from the foc'sle of an early war Bathurst class corvette. The configuration of the mast and yardarms is clearly visible in this pre-radar equipped ship.*

# The ABC of RAN Corvettes

## Sleeping

# Z



*There were no bunks for ratings in the Bathurst class corvettes. Instead, sailors slept in hammocks that were rigged at night time and stowed in hammock lockers during the day time. Conditions were cramped and in the tropics heat and condensation were a sailor's constant companion.*

## Able Seaman Libby Pearce



*For the five officers that complemented each of the Bathurst class corvettes their accommodation was somewhat better than that of ratings. Bunks, although comfortable in calm weather proved otherwise in these ships that would roll violently in anything other than a flat sea.*



