

DARWIN, TSMV MANUNDA AND FREMANTLE

A special Virtual Visit remembering February 1942

On 19 February 1942 more than 240 Japanese aircraft attacked Darwin in two separate raids, the first ever enemy attack on mainland Australia. More than 240 Australian and US service personnel and civilians were killed. Eight ships were sunk in Darwin Harbour and many others damaged. This was the first of 64 bombing raids by Japanese aircraft on Darwin between February 1942 and late 1943. The 19 February bombing would remain the most significant attack of the Second World War on Australian soil.



Darwin 19 February 1942
Ray Honisett 1984



14 Australian Anti Aircraft Battery.
Fixed Defence Darwin 1942
Roy Hodgkinson 1942

One of the ships which suffered bomb damage was *TSMV Manunda* (Twin Screw Motor Vessel) of the Adelaide Steamship Company. The *Manunda* was built by William Beardmore and Company at Dalmuir in Scotland and was 136 metres long, with a beam of 18 metres, Passenger capacity was 176 first class and 136 second class. The ship was launched on 27 November 1928. It was a company policy for all its motor vessels to have a name starting with "M" and the ship was named after an Aboriginal word meaning "place near water".



She was the largest ship operated by the Adelaide Steamship Company at the time. She arrived in Australia in June 1929 for service on the Australian coastal trade between Sydney, Fremantle, Melbourne and Cairns.

Early in World War 2, she was converted into a hospital ship at Sydney in compliance with the Geneva Convention Regulations. Taken over by the authorities on 25 May 1940, she entered service as *AHS Manunda* on 22 July 1940, under Captain James Garden. The general hospital based on board was commanded by Lt. Col. John Beith, Members of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on board were led by Matron Clara Jane Shumack



AHS Manunda sailed on a shakedown cruise to Darwin, Port Moresby and returned to Sydney, before deployment on four trips to Egypt. She was then despatched to Darwin. On the morning of 19 February 1942, *AHS Manunda* was damaged during the Japanese air raids on Darwin, despite her highly prominent red cross markings on a white background. Twelve members of the ship's crew and hospital staff were killed, 19 others were seriously wounded and another 40 received minor wounds. *Manunda* was able to act as a casualty clearing station for injured personnel from other ships involved in the attack. She sailed to Fremantle the next day.

Captain Garden was later awarded the OBE for his bravery and skill, both during the attacks, in leading a fire extinguishing team on the ship and in later navigating it by the stars to Fremantle with no navigation equipment and a jury-rigged steering system. First Mate Thomas Minto was awarded the MBE for gallantry and devotion to duty during the air raids and Matron Clara Shumack was awarded the Royal Red Cross.

The bomb damage sustained in Darwin by *AHS Manunda* on 19 February 1942, visible to all while docked in Fremantle, was evidence beyond the control of the Censor that war had come to Australia. Temporary repairs to bomb damage were made at Fremantle between 27 February and 5 March 1942 before *Manunda* headed east to Adelaide for another major refit.

AHS Manunda then went to Milne Bay where her status as a hospital ship was honoured by attacking Japanese naval units which raked her with searchlights on three nights running. Subsequently she was relocated as required and followed the Allied forces to various islands around the South West Pacific Theatre. After the Japanese surrender, *Manunda* was despatched to Singapore to repatriate ex-POWs and civilian internees who had been imprisoned in Changi Prison. She also sailed to

Labuan in Borneo to pick up ex-POWs and civilian internees from Batu Lintang camp.

LINKS FOR FURTHER DISCOVERY

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/194363273>

https://www.battleforaustralia.asn.au/Hospital_Ship.php

<https://www.ozatwar.com/ran/manunda.htm>

<https://www.henrysmilitarycollectables.com.au/products/uniforms-and-textiles/australian-navy-pennant-tsmv-manunda.aspx>

<https://jmvh.org/article/editorial-4/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/41311545@N05/5394223112/in/photostream/>

<https://www.fremantleports.com.au/the-port/history-and-heritage/wartime>

<https://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/ran-pacific-war>

<https://fremantlestuff.info/fhs/fs/2/Sherriff.html>

<https://www.fremantlewesternaustrialia.com.au/fremantle-history.htm>

https://www.far-eastern-heroes.org.uk/Love_Sprang_From_Batu_Lintang/html/ahs_manunda_history.htm

https://birtwistlewiki.com.au/wiki/AHS_Manunda

<http://ssmaritime.com/Manoora.htm>

<http://ssmaritime.com/Manoora.htm>

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/REL32365>



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

REL32365

