

# Basic Detail Report

---



**00051278**

**Title**

HMS KANIMBLA crew after the capture of MS HOHENFELS and other Axis merchant shipping at Bandar Shapur, Iran

**Date**

1941

**Medium**

Black and white photographic print on paper

**Dimensions**

Overall: 231 × 293 mm

**Name**

Photograph

**History**

Originally built as a merchant passenger ship for McIlwraith McEachern Limited, KANIMBLA operated on the passenger service between Cairns and Fremantle between May 1936 and September 1939. With the outbreak of war, KANIMBLA was requisitioned on 5 September 1939 for conversion to an armed merchant cruiser in Britain's Royal Navy. On 6 October 1939 the ship was commissioned HMS KANIMBLA under Commander Frank Getting, RAN, with an almost exclusively Australian crew on board. KANIMBLA patrolled the coasts of China and Japan, intercepting and searching ships for contraband, boarding vessels from European countries under German occupation, and performing general patrol and escort duties. In 1941 KANIMBLA was deployed to the Persian Gulf and on the evening of 24 August, KANIMBLA, with 300 Indian troops onboard, led a flotilla of allied vessels in a surprise attack on the Iranian port of Bandar Shahpur capturing eight German and Italian merchant vessels with valuable cargo, two Iranian gunboats and a floating dock. KANIMBLA targetted the German MS HOHENFELS, sending a boarding party to the vessel. Crews from the captured vessels attempted to scuttle their ships through fire, explosive charges and flooding, and HOHENFELS nearly succeeded. To stop the ship from sinking crew from KANIMBLA used tugs to drive the vessel onto a sandbank near the edge of the harbour. Sydney Morning Herald, 20 September 1941 reported the event: "R.A.N. MEN SAVE NAZI SHIPS Daring in Iran LONDON, Sept. 19 (A.A.P.). Australian naval ratings, assisted by Indians, carried out a daring exploit when seven of eight Axis ships were saved from scuttling at Bandar Shahpur (Iran) after the British landing, reports the Tehran correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph." The Navy prepared an expeditionary force consisting of dhows, tugs, and launches. The Australians and Indians had been practising old-time tactics of boarding, including the use of grappling-irons. The little fleet set out before dawn, and when it stole in, the look-out in the nearest Axis ship, the Hohenfels (7,862 tons) did not suspect anything until it was too late. The Australians and Indians scrambled aboard the ships, and groping in the dark holds, turned off the sea cocks, plugged

the holes, cut the wires to gelignite charges, and doused deliberately-lit fires. All this was done so quickly that there were no British casualties. Six of the seven ships saved are at present being repaired in India. The seventh is being salvaged. The eighth was burnt out." KANIMBLA remained in the area until 11 October, supervising the port and carrying out salvage work on the captured vessels, particularly the HOHENFELS which required significant diving work to patch the ship, pump out the water and refloat it. Petty Officer Humphries, an officer in the merchant navy on board KANIMBLA, was involved in this task and was willing to dive into the flooded engine room in hazardous conditions 12 times to make repairs. He was awarded the George Medal for his courage in 1942. Towards the end of 1941 KANIMBLA escorted the first convoy out of Singapore following the Japanese attack on Malaya and later carried out convoy work off the Australian coast. In 1943 the ship was again converted, this time into a landing ship infantry (LSI) for operations in the Pacific and was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy as HMAS KANIMBLA under Commander N H Shaw, RAN. Transport and troop landings followed and as part of Task Force 79 in 1945, KANIMBLA was involved in the battle of Lingayen Gulf. After the war the ship was involved in the repatriation of Australian servicemen from the Pacific Islands, returned Dutch dependents to the East Indies, and transported troops of the British Commonwealth occupation forces to Japan. Decommissioned in 1949, KANIMBLA was returned to McIlwraith McEachern in 1950. In 1961 the vessel was sold to the Pacific Transport Company and renamed ORIENTAL QUEEN. The Indonesian government chartered the vessel for three years to transport pilgrims from Indonesia to Jeddah. A Japanese shipping company later chartered ORIENTAL QUEEN for service between Guam and Yokohama. The vessel was sold for scrap and broken up after 1973. List of officers on verso of photograph: Front row (seated on deck), L-R: C.P.O Master-at-Arms RAN; Sub-Lt. Tony Ellis RANR(S); Sub. Lt. Derek Simon RANR(S); P.O. Gibbings R.P.O RAN Second row (seated) L-R: Eng. Lieut. Clark RANR(S); Lieut. John Netherton RANR; Pay Lt. Cdr. Bruce Freeman RANR (S); Lt. Cdr. David Richards RANR(S); Lt. Cdr. G.C.F Branson RN; Captain W.L.G Adams RN; Eng. Cdr McGuffog RANR(S); Eng. Lt. Cdr. Carmichael RANR(S); Surg. Lt. Cdr McKenzie RANR; Lieut. John Maynard RANR; Lieut Gordon Henry RANR(S) Third row (standing) L-R: Eng. Lt. (Elect) Curry RANR(S); Warrant Gunner Lowry (RAN); Sub-Lt. Geoff Champion RANR(S); Eng. Lt. Marshall RANR(S); Eng. Lt. Norton RANR (S); Pay Sub-Lt. Campbell RANR(S); Sub-Lt. RANR; Sub-Lt. Sidney Cains RANR(S); Lieut. Wally Mullans RANR (S); Lieut. Edward Hackford RANR; Sub-Lt. C. Donald Dykes RANR(S); Lieut. Eric Connor RANR; Eng. Lt. Brown RANR(S); Lieut. RANR; Eng. Lt. Sinclair RANR(S); Sub. Lt. RANR; Pay Lt. RANR; Pay Sub.Lieut. Edward Evans RANR.