

Basic Detail Report



Curlew

Vessel number

HV000402

Date

1953

Primary Maker

Montrose Shipyard

Description

CURLEW was launched as HMS CHEDISTON from the Montrose Shipyard in Scotland on 6 October 1953. The design was called the Ton class and they were built for minesweeping work. After World War II there were different mine types that had been developed before and during the conflict. The Ton class's composite aluminium and double diagonal mahogany planked wooden construction was adopted as suitable for dealing with magnetic mines, and they were sufficiently quiet not to set off acoustic mines. It served with the RN until six of the vessels were allocated to the RAN and purchased in 1961. The vessels were re-engined with Napier Deltic diesels, fitted with air-conditioning and set up for work in Australian waters. The fleet of six craft went under their own power from the UK and reached Sydney in December 1962 where they were located at the newly established base HMAS Waterhen in Waverton, North Sydney. They were known as the 16th Minesweeping Squadron until the late 1960s when they were re-designated the 1st Mine Countermeasures Squadron, a change that noted the new functions dealing with changes in mine warfare technology. The trip out had its moments as recorded by one of the crew: 'It was a long and difficult voyage for "Curley" as she kept suffering problems with her propulsion - later discovered to be caused by the collapse of one of the resilient mountings that supported the plate on which her machinery was mounted (to keep vibration and noise out of the water)" CURLEW was given pennant number M1121 and saw duty in many areas, usually in company with some of its sisterships. In 1963 it cleared World War II mines from Tonolei Harbour in Bougainville off Papua New Guinea, and in the mid-1960s it worked with RN craft during the Indonesian and Malaysian confrontation as a patrol vessel. In 1968 it was converted to a minehunter. Previously as a minesweeper its principal function was to sweep a large area containing a minefield, often by towing a line and drogue which cut the wires anchoring mines in position, or towing a noise maker or magnetic loop to deal with other types of mine fields. As a minehunter it was fitted with high definition sonar set which could look ahead of the ship for individual mines that were then destroyed or degaussed by clearance divers. CURLEW continued to operate in the Far East and Northern Australian waters, joining SEATO exercises and conducting specific operations, as well as a goodwill visit to Fiji and New Caledonia in 1971. In 1973 it was back in Australia and operating off South Australia on fishery patrols and exercises in Bass Strait. HMAS CURLEW was decommissioned in 1990 after 37 years service having travelled over 377,000 nautical miles. It was sold to private interests and had a varied career as a dive boat, then floating casino and brothel in Rockhampton, central Queensland. In the mid 1990s it was

bought by an ex-RAN Leading Cook, who was able to motor the vessel under its own power to Tasmania. CURLEW has been used in two war films, 'Paradise Road' and 'The Thin Red Line' filmed in Queensland. In 2010 it is currently being restored in Tasmania and changed hands in 2018.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 46.63 m x 45.11 m x 8.53 m x 2.44 m, 365.85 tonnes (153 ft x 148 ft x 28 ft x 8 ft, 360 tons)