

Basic Detail Report



Abraham Crijnsen

Vessel number

HV000194

Date

1937

Primary Maker

G 't Hooft

Description

ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN is a small minesweeper built at the Werf Gusto shipyard in Holland to a design by G't Hoof known as the JAN VAN AMSTEEL class. The ship is 55.8 metres long, built in steel and lightly armed with a 3 inch gun and four small anti aircraft guns. The transom features a rolled plate to facilitate deploying and retrieving equipment. The vessel was laid down on 21 March 1936 and was commissioned into the Royal Netherlands Navy on 10 March 1937 as the HR MS ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN, named after a famous naval ship captain from the late 17th century, the golden age of Dutch naval history. In November 1937 the ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN and three sisterships arrived in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) and were stationed at Soerabaja (now Surabaya). When the Pacific was drawn into World War II in 1941 ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN was deployed in mine laying, minesweeping and convoy escort duties in the Dutch East Indies. Japanese forces moved through Singapore and into the Netherlands East Indies early in 1942, sinking or damaging allied forces' major capital ships with their superior air power. The smaller Dutch fleet was soon the only significant force left in the region. Virtually surrounded by Japanese forces preparations were made for them to escape to Australia. On March 6th 1942 a coded message ordered the remaining minesweepers to leave. At this point escape appeared doomed and the ships master, Lieutenant Commander Van Miert permitted crew to leave the ship if they did not wish to remain aboard. A number left the ship and at 2130 hrs ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN sailed from Soerabaja, unlit and covered by camouflage nets. Two other sister ships left together. One was later scuttled, the other was sunk by the Japanese destroyer ARASHIO with the loss of 21 crew of the 80 onboard. A fourth vessel was scuttled in the harbour before leaving. Meanwhile ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN began a pattern of remaining at anchor by day under camouflage and sailing only at night. The camouflage was very effective. The crew would go ashore and cut tree limbs and foliage to make the ship look like an island from the sea or air. They renewed the material each day. The voyage to the North West Cape off Western Australia took five days, but was fraught with danger as they passed through narrow straits, changed course to avoid an unidentified vessel, and gathered information from locals on possible Japanese activity. The most critical issue was fuel. ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN only had bunkering for 110 tonnes of fuel, and the captain had to slow the vessel to reduce consumption in order to make the lengthy voyage. ABRAHAM CRIJNSSEN finally reached Geraldton on the WA coast at 1200 hrs on 15 March, having made an extraordinary unaccompanied passage in enemy controlled waters, thanks to a well conceived and ingenious plan to avoid identification. The captain

and members of the crew received honours from the Dutch for the courageous voyage. Three Dutch submarines and a light cruiser also made it to Australia and joined the war effort with ABRAHAM CRIJNSEN. It escorted two of the submarines from Fremantle to Sydney in April and May 1942, and was then fitted with sonar. In August 1942 ABRAHAM CRIJNSEN was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy and used for convoy protection on the east coast of Australia. It was manned by a mixed crew from the Netherlands and Australia. In May 1943 it was transferred back to the Royal Dutch Navy but continued to serve on the east coast, based out of Sydney and Melbourne. After the war ABRAHAM CRIJNSEN returned to the Netherlands East Indies, then sailed home to Holland. It was decommissioned in 1961 and donated to the Sea Cadet Corps in The Hague. In 1995 ABRAHAM CRIJNSEN was donated to the Dutch Naval Museum at Den Helder where it was returned to its wartime configuration. It remains afloat and on display as a memorial to the courage of the Royal Dutch Navy during World War II with its links to the RAN.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 55.8 m x 7.8 m x 2.2 m, 525 tonnes (183.08 ft x 25.59 ft x 7.22 ft, 533.4 tons)