

**Shane Andrew Clarke Watson (1915-1994)**, was born on 21 July 1915, at the village of Broughshane, County of Antrim, Ulster, Northern Ireland, the eldest son of Andrew and Kathleen Watson, and brother to Kathleen and Godfrey. The Watson family emigrated to Australia in the *White Star* Line vessel, SS *Ceramic*, departing from Liverpool on 21 April 1921, sailing via Cape Town, Albany, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Watson was educated at The Scots College, Warwick, Queensland, from Preparatory to the Matriculation prerequisite for entry to the University of Queensland. In 1932, Watson received excellent results at this level in English, French, Latin, Mathematics A, Mathematics B, Chemistry and Physics. Due to unknown circumstances, in 1933, Watson was admitted to the University of Sydney, Faculty of Medicine. In 1939, he graduated Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery with honours, and was also the recipient of the Hinder Memorial Prize for clinical surgery. On 1 May 1940, the New South Wales Medical Board deemed '6283, Watson, Shane Andrew Clarke, General Hospital, Brisbane MBBS, 1939, University of Sydney, to be a Legally Qualified Medical Practitioner.'

In June 1940, Watson volunteered for service with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as a Surgeon Lieutenant, Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR), and on 15 June 1940, he was inducted into naval service at his home port Division of Brisbane. On 11 November, Watson was appointed to HMAS *Cerberus* to attend short courses, be issued with certain items of kit, and await passage by sea to England in the *Blue Funnel* line vessel, SS *Nestor*. Upon arrival on 9 January 1941, he was appointed to Royal Navy Barracks, Portsmouth, and on 28 January he was appointed to the 'N' class destroyer, HMAS *Nestor*, 'on commissioning', as the ship's medical officer. On 3 February, *Nestor* was commissioned for service in the RAN as HMAS *Nestor*. On 12 February, construction was completed, and acceptance trials commenced. On 1 March, *Nestor* sailed from Clyde on completion of trials and storing to Scapa Flow for work-up with ships of the Home Fleet. During work-up, *Nestor* was deployed as part of the escort for HMS *Hood* for passage from Rosyth to Scapa Flow after her refit. On completion of work-up *Nestor* joined 6<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla for Fleet duties. In early April, *Nestor* took passage to Clyde for essential repairs, boiler clean and installation of the new Type 285 Gunnery Control radar equipment. She was taken in hand for these at Fairfield Yard, Govan. On 1 May, *Nestor* returned to Scapa Flow on completion of radar trials, and on 3 May she joined 6<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla for fleet duties. On 5 May, *Nestor* was deployed with HM Destroyers *Somali*, *Eskimo* and *Bedouin* as screen for HM Cruisers *Edinburgh*, *Manchester* and *Birmingham*, to intercept the German weather ship *München* and capture intact its *Enigma* coding machine with all its associated documentation. On 7 May, *Nestor* remained with the screen during the boarding of *München*, then embarked the captured equipment and detached forthwith from the escort, taking passage to Scapa Flow at best speed to deliver this material for detailed analysis by expert authorities.

On 23 May, *Nestor* was deployed as part of the screen for Home Fleet capital ships, during the search and tracking of the German battleship *Bismark* and her consort *Prinz Eugen*. On 25 May *Nestor* detached to Iceland to refuel during the search for the two enemy ships. On 27 May, *Nestor* was present at the sinking of *Bismark*, and on 28 May, formed part of the escort for HM battleships *King George V* and *Rodney* during their return passage to Loch Ewe. On 8 June, *Nestor* returned to Clyde for installation of a four-inch anti-aircraft gun in place of her after set of torpedo tubes, and on completion, rejoined her Flotilla for Home Fleet duties. During July, *Nestor* was nominated for detached service with other Home Fleet ships as escort for a Malta relief convoy, codenamed Operation *Substance*. On 12 July, *Nestor* deployed with HM Destroyers *Cossack*, *Māori*, *Lightning* and *Sikh* as escort for HM Battleship *Nelson* and HM Cruisers *Manchester* and *Arethusa*, providing Ocean escort for military convoy **WS9C** during passage from Clyde to Gibraltar. On 17 July, *Nestor* detached from **WS9C** to escort the troop transport HMTS *Pasteur* in company with HMS *Lightning* and HMS *Manchester* to Gibraltar. HM destroyers *Avonvale*, *Eridge* and *Farndale* joined **WS9C** to supplement the escort during passage in the western Mediterranean. On 19 July, *Nestor* arrived at Gibraltar with *Pasteur*. On 21 July, *Nestor* was deployed with the screen for HMS *Nelson*, HMS *Manchester*, HMS *Arethusa* and HM Cruiser *Manxman*, with HM Destroyers *Cossack*, *Māori*, *Sikh*, *Fearless*, *Foxhound*, *Firedrake*, *Eridge*, *Avonvale* and *Farndale* as Force 'X' to provide the escort for the passage to Malta of a relief convoy. The next day, *Nestor* attacked and drove off the Italian submarine *Diaspro* which had fired torpedoes at ships of Force 'H' providing cover for passage of the Malta bound convoy in the Mediterranean. As a result of *Nestor*'s detection and intervention, the torpedo attacks by *Diaspro* failed. On 23 July, the convoy came under aerial attacks, during which *Manchester* and *Fearless* were hit. *Fearless* was disabled, and later had to be sunk, while *Manchester* had to be escorted back to Gibraltar. Following further aerial attacks after Force 'H' detached, *Firedrake* was disabled and had to be towed back to Gibraltar. The very next day, the convoy was under attack by a flotilla of eight Italian *E* boats. The merchant ship MV *Sydney Star* was hit by torpedo and was unable to remain with the convoy. *Nestor* was detached to assist the damaged merchantman and began embarking the four hundred and sixty-seven troops she had on board, along with some of the crew. Although drawing almost forty feet forward because of the damage to number one and two holds, *Sydney Star* was able to restore power to her engines, and proceeded at reduced speed to Malta, escorted all the way by *Nestor*. After disembarking almost five hundred 'passengers', *Nestor* joined with the remaining ships of Force 'X' and returned to Gibraltar.

Upon arrival at Gibraltar on 27 July, *Nestor* joined with HM Destroyers *Faulkner*, *Foresight*, *Fury*, *Forester*, *Foxhound*, *Cossack*, *Māori*, *Encounter* and *Eridge* as screen for *Nelson*, HM Battlecruiser *Renown* and HM Aircraft Carrier *Ark Royal*, as well as providing cover for the passage of HM Cruisers *Hermione*, *Arethusa* and *Manxman*, HMS

*Lightning* and HMS *Sikh* during their passage from Gibraltar to the Sicilian Narrows. These ships were carrying troops and logistics to Malta from the troop transport *Leinster*, which had been part of the *Substance* convoy, but had run aground off Gibraltar. *Nestor* remained with the screen for ships of Force 'H' west of Sicilian Narrows, when the ships carrying logistics and personnel detached with escort by Force 'X' to pass through the dangerous waters off Sicily. On 1 August, *Nestor* was deployed with the screen for Force 'H' ships when Force 'X' rejoined and took passage back to Gibraltar. On 10 August, *Nestor* was part of the escort for Convoy **HG70** during the initial part of the passage to England from Gibraltar, along with HM Sloop *Deptford* and Destroyers *Faulknor*, *Encounter* and *Avonvale*. Two days later, they came under attack by U-boats, but none of these attacks were successful. When detached from **HG70**, *Nestor* returned to Gibraltar. On 22 August, *Nestor* was deployed with *Encounter*, *Forester*, *Foresight* and *Fury* as screen for *Ark Royal*, *Nelson* and cruiser *Hermione*, during air strikes on Italian installations at Tempo, Sardinia, and as cover for minelaying off Livorno by *Manxman* (Operation *Mincemeat*). *Nestor* returned to Gibraltar on 26 August with ships of Force 'H'. On 31 August, *Nestor* was deployed with *Encounter* as part of the screen for HM Battlecruiser *Repulse* and the armed merchant cruiser *Derbyshire* to provide Ocean escort for military convoy **WS11** during Atlantic passage from Freetown to Clyde. On 13 September, *Nestor* sustained damage from the premature explosion of a depth charge when escorting **WS11**. She detached from **WS11** and took passage to England, after first calling in at Gibraltar. At the start of October, *Nestor* was taken in hand at HM Dockyard, Devonport, for an overdue refit and repairs. While undergoing refit, *Nestor* was fitted with additional 20mm Oerlikon guns to improve her close-range anti-aircraft defence. At the end of her time in dockyard hands, *Nestor* was nominated for further escort duties with military convoys. On 5 December 1941, *Nestor* sailed from Devonport to Clyde, and on the 9<sup>th</sup> joined with HM Destroyers *Foxhound* and *Gurkha* as part of Ocean Escort for Convoy **WS14** during that part of the Atlantic passage from Clyde. On 13 December, the three destroyers detached from **WS14** and took passage to Gibraltar. The next day, they were joined by the destroyer HMS *Croome* for an anti-submarine search west of Gibraltar, following intelligence reports of U-boat deployments entering the Mediterranean. On 15 December, *Nestor* sighted U-127 on the surface and carried out depth charge attacks with her consorts, sinking the U-boat in position South-East of Cape Saint Vincent. There were no survivors. On 20 December, *Nestor* was transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet to join 7<sup>th</sup> Flotilla based at Alexandria. On 22 December, *Nestor* took passage from Gibraltar to Malta via the Sicilian Narrows in company with HM Cruiser *Dido* and HM Destroyers *Arrow*, *Foxhound*, *Gurkha* and *Zulu*, arriving at Malta two days later. On 26 December, *Nestor* sailed from Malta in company with HM Cruisers *Ajax* and *Dido*, and HM Destroyers *Arrow*, *Foxhound*, *Gurkha*, *Lance*, *Lively* and *Zulu*, as escort for four empty merchant ships taking passage to Alexandria as Convoy **ME8**. The next day, **ME8**

came under sustained aerial attack, but despite this reached Alexandria two days later without loss or damage to any ships of the convoy. On 29 December, *Nestor* joined with HMA destroyers *Napier* and *Nizam* of the 7<sup>th</sup> Flotilla, to carry out bombardments off Bardia, then returned to Alexandria on 1 January 1942.

On 3 January 1942, *Nestor* was transferred with *Napier* and *Nizam* for service in the Indian Ocean, and took passage to Aden, arriving there on the 7<sup>th</sup>. On 9 January, the three destroyers were deployed for escort of HM Aircraft Carrier *Indomitable* during passage from Port Sudan in the Red Sea for delivery of aircraft to Singapore, codenamed Operation *Opponent*. On 26 January, after calling at Addu Atoll, *Nestor* remained with her two consorts as escort to the Carrier during the first launch of aircraft near Cocos Island. In view of the deterioration of events at Singapore, these *Hurricane* aircraft were diverted to land at Batavia. On completion of the second aircraft launch, *Nestor* and her consorts remained with *Indomitable* as escorts during passage to Trincomalee, arriving there on 2 February, and joining the Eastern Fleet with the same ships. Soon thereafter, *Nestor*, *Napier* and *Nizam* were once again escorting *Indomitable* back to Port Sudan, arriving there on 24 February to embark another delivery of aircraft for Batavia, and sail on completion of loading. However, on 3 March the delivery of aircraft was cancelled. *Nestor*, *Napier* and *Nizam* were then deployed with the Eastern Fleet for screening of major units. On 31 March, *Nestor* was deployed as part of the screen for HM Battleship *Warspite*, HM Aircraft Carriers *Indomitable* and *Formidable* and HM Cruisers *Cornwall*, *Dorsetshire*, *Emerald* and *Enterprise*, with HM Destroyers *Foxhound*, *Napier*, *Paladin*, *Panther* and *Hotspur* deployed as Force 'A'. On 4 April, Force 'A' arrived at Addu Atoll after an unsuccessful search for Japanese forces reported to be on passage to carry out aerial attacks on Colombo. The next day, *Nestor* sailed with screen of Force 'A' to carry out a further search for Japanese forces. During this search - which was carried out to far westward - both *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire*, which had detached from the main force, were sunk by heavy Japanese aerial attacks. On 8 April, *Nestor* returned to Addu Atoll with Force 'A'. The next day, *Nestor* made passage with units from Force 'A' to provide escort protection for shipping between Indian ports and the Red Sea. On 11 April, *Nestor* detached from escort duties with *Napier* for docking and essential repairs. On completion, *Nestor* took passage to rejoin the Eastern Fleet at the port of Killindini, Mombasa, for convoy defence. *Nestor* was then nominated for transfer to the Mediterranean for escort of a planned Malta relief convoy from Alexandria. On 27 May, *Nestor* took passage to Alexandria for detached service with HM Cruiser *Newcastle* and Destroyers *Napier*, *Inconstant*, *Paladin*, *Hotspur* and *Griffin*, deployed at Alexandria. *Nestor* was then nominated for escort of Malta relief Convoy, codenamed Operation *Vigorous*. On 12 June, *Nestor* sailed from Alexandria as escort for Convoy **MW11B** comprising of eleven ships, of which two were tankers. Other escorts for **MW11B** were HM Destroyers *Hasty*, *Hero*, *Inconstant*, *Javelin*, *Jervis*, *Kelvin*, *Napier*, *Nizam*, *Norman*, *Pakenham*, *Paladin*, *Sikh* and *Zulu*. HM Battleship *Centurion*, disguised as a *King George*

V class battleship, was also part of the escort, with Destroyers *Fortune*, *Griffin*, HM Corvettes *Erica*, *Delphinium*, *Primula* and *Snapdragon*. Cover was provided by HM Cruisers *Arethusa*, *Birmingham*, *Cleopatra*, *Dido*, *Euryalus*, *Hermione* and *Newcastle*. On 13 June, *Nestor* joined escorts for Convoys **MW11A** and **NW11C**. On 14 June, Covering Force joined combined convoy under heavy and sustained aerial attacks during which two merchant ships, SS *Bhutan* and SS *Aagtekerk* were sunk. On 15 June, the convoy was ordered by C-in-C Mediterranean, Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, at Alexandria, to reverse course because of threats from an Italian Battle Squadron known to be on passage to intercept the convoy. Attacked by German *E*-boats, the Cruiser *Newcastle* was hit by torpedo. While this was not fatal, she had to be withdrawn from covering duty. The destroyer *Hasty* was also hit by torpedo, and once her crew was removed, she was sunk by her sister ship *Hotspur*. The combined convoy was then ordered to resume passage westward following optimistic reports of successful aerial and submarine attacks on Italian ships. Orders by C-in-C were then rescinded, and the combined convoy again reversed course. Following later reports, Harwood signalled Rear Admiral Phillip Vian, Flag Officer commanding the convoy escorts, that the decision to proceed to Malta or retire to Alexandria, rested with him.

At 18:06 on 15 June, during a high-level bombing attack, *Nestor* was straddled by three one thousand-pound bombs. One landed about six feet from the port side, a second about fifty feet to starboard, both landing about amidships; and the third landed about fifty feet astern and off to port. It was later thought that the first bomb had probably struck the masthead radar as it fell, because after the attack, it was noted that its scanner had been shattered. The enormous force generated by three bombs exploding simultaneously lifted *Nestor* wholly out of the water, crashing back heavily as she fell. The upper deck area between the open bridge and funnel flexed violently, and the Captain and bridge personnel in the near vicinity were flung to the deck. While *Nestor* wallowed heavily in the swell, her crew went about ascertaining the extent of the damage the ship had incurred. All light and power had been lost. But the worst damage was in both boiler rooms. The near miss on the port side amidships had torn a large hole in the hull below the waterline, adjacent to No. 1 Boiler Room. It was believed at the time that all four men in that area would have been killed instantaneously, their bodies being immersed in the oily waters filling the compartment. Water had also flooded No. 2 Boiler Room, making it impossible to raise steam. *Nestor's* crew - shocked at first by the noise and blast of the exploding bombs - remained focussed. Immediately after the attack, engine room personnel had rushed to the Boiler Room to help their shipmates. But they were driven back by a cloud of superheated steam escaping from a ruptured steam line. They waited until the steam had dissipated, then, led by Surgeon Lieutenant Watson - who had rushed from his action station - felt their way into the doomed compartment.

The citation for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) to Watson, ever so briefly describes the conditions under which he and his team had to work when trying to rescue their shipmates from an area which had been blown to smithereens:

‘For gallantry and devotion to duty when HMAS *Nestor* was lost on 15/16 June, 1942. This officer displayed outstanding bravery in immediately entering No. 1 boiler room in order to rescue the crew who he knew must be either killed or seriously injured. Of the conditions in the boiler room, he had no idea, when he entered it, he found it in darkness and flooded. In spite of this, he dived repeatedly until all the men were recovered. Unfortunately, they had all been killed.’ These were:

- Blight, Leslie J, Stoker, RANR, F3546, Western Australia.
- Bulmer, Jack B, Petty Officer Stoker, RAN, 19982, Victoria.
- Burns, Mathew, A/Leading Stoker, RN, C/KX94897, United Kingdom.
- Hill, Campbell, Leading Stoker, RAN, 21751, Western Australia.

While Watson and his team tried to revive the four casualties by artificial resuscitation, damage control parties were at work throughout the ship. Shipwright Alexander Coole entered the wrecked compartment, and he and his team immediately began to plug the gaping hole in the hull, and shore up damaged bulkheads. The flooding had settled *Nestor* by the bows and listed her to port. On the upper deck, parties went about methodically ditching torpedoes and depth charges, and any other readily removeable top weight. When the engineer, Lieut. Cdr. (E) Roger Parker, reported to Commander Rosenthal that *Nestor* was as seaworthy as she could be - taking into account all repairs now in place - and she could be towed. But attacks continued without respite until nightfall. The tow was passed to HMS *Javelin* under these hazardous conditions. *Javelin* gradually worked up to 14 ½ knots, and for a while all went reasonably well. The two destroyers, and the three *Hunt* class destroyers sent to escort them back to Alexandria, became targets for German aircraft, which seemed to sense some easy prey. The five ships between them fired off a barrage, which spoilt the pilots aim. High altitude bombing was followed by torpedo bomber attack. However, the five destroyers emerged unscathed from these, with two aircraft shot down. One was attributed to *Nestor*'s gunners. Nightfall brought further problems. *Nestor* was yawing wildly, with the towline parting twice. The trim without power to correct it, was making her unstable. Time was running out for *Nestor*. A third towline was passed, but the stricken destroyer was yawing even more. *Nestor* and *Javelin* could not survive another day of attacks. If the aircraft did not succeed in destroying her, enemy submarines might. Then there was a third threat. German *E*-boats were sighted circling the flotilla. On 16 June, at 05:30, Rosenthal asked *Javelin* to make contact with C-in-C and advise him of the situation. A short while later, the decision was made; *Nestor* was to be scuttled. *Nestor*'s ship's company were taken off as *Javelin* set about the job of sinking the crippled ship. An hour and seven depth charges later, *Nestor* rolled over and sank beneath the waves.

On 17 June 1942, Surgeon Lieutenant Watson was transported back to Australia for a period of survivors leave, and to avail himself of a period of accrued overseas service leave. On completion of leave, he was appointed to HMAS *Penguin*, additional. On 5 February 1943, Watson was appointed to the Armed Merchant Cruiser (AMC), HMAS *Manoora*. In March 1943, the Australian Cabinet had approved the withdrawal of service of three RAN AMCs - *Manoora*, *Westralia* and *Kanimbla* - and for their conversion into Landing Ship Infantry (LSI), capable of transporting and landing over twelve hundred troops each. In addition to its naval crew to run the ship, man the weapons and operate the boats, each RAN LSI also carried an Army detachment of about one hundred as ship's Army staff. Their job was to do most of the stevedoring tasks on board, driving winches, loading and unloading stores, stowing holds and so forth, but they also lent a hand with normal shipboard tasks.

In March 1943, *Manoora* proceeded to Port Stephens for a few days where an amphibious training facility had been established, before returning to Sydney. She then departed for Melbourne where, until June, she was involved in further amphibious training with United States troops. A/Captain Cecil Baldwin MVO, RAN, assumed command of *Manoora* on 29 June 1943 and throughout July she operated in the Sydney/Port Stephens area, after which she departed for Milne Bay, transporting Australian troops. *Manoora* returned to Port Stephens on 16 August remaining there until 2 October. She then visited Sydney and afterwards returned to Port Stephens for a short stay, then transported troops to Oro Bay, New Guinea, a voyage she repeated in early November.

In November 1943, Watson was appointed to the *Tribal*-class destroyer, HMAS *Arunta*. For the period of time Watson was to serve in *Arunta*, the main highlights of her involvement in the Pacific area of Operations consisted of the following:

- 30 November 1943, *Arunta* bombarded Japanese ammunition dumps at Gasmata, New Britain.
- 15 December, *Arunta* provided naval gunfire support (NGFS) for landings at Arawe.
- 20 December, *Arunta* provided NGFS for Cape Gloucester landings.
- During January 1944, *Arunta* provided NGFS of landings by the US 32<sup>nd</sup> Division at Saidor, New Guinea.
- During March, *Arunta* transported and landed the 7<sup>th</sup> US Cavalry at Hayne Harbour, Admiralty Islands.
- During April, *Arunta* provided NGFS for Allied landings at Hollandia.
- During mid-May, *Arunta* provided NGFS of Allied landings at Wakde Island; took one prisoner and verified the deaths of 859 Japanese.
- On 27 May, *Arunta* provided NGFS of Allied landings at Biak Island.

- On 2 July, *Arunta* provided NGFS of Allied landings at Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guinea.
- On 30 July, *Arunta* provided NGFS of Allied landings at Cape Sansapor.
- On 15 September, *Arunta* provided NGFS for landings at Morotai Island.
- On 25 October, *Arunta* was involved at Leyte Gulf - Battle of Surigao Strait, the final and most decisive surface engagement of World War 2.

Fought in darkness, the Japanese were routed with the loss of two Battleships, four Heavy Cruisers, one Aircraft Carrier, three Light Cruisers and four Destroyers. The USN lost two Escort Carriers and three Destroyers. Part of this action was described by Watson when he wrote:

‘Soon after 03:00 the destroyers of the eastern flank were ordered in to attack *Yamashiro*. The six destroyers divided into two groups of three, *Arunta*, with USN ships *Killen* and *Beale*, and *Arunta* acquitted herself well, sending off four torpedoes before we turned into our own smoke and retired at speed.’

Early November 1944, Watson was appointed to HMAS *Rushcutter*. Then on 5 February 1945 he was appointed to HMAS *Kuttabal*. On 2 March 1946, Watson was appointed to HMAS *Rushcutter*, ‘to shore, appointment terminated.’ On 8 March 1946, he was appointed Surgeon Lieutenant Commander, RANVR. Following the establishment of the RAN Diving Branch at HMAS *Rushcutter* in 1951, underwater medicine support was initially provided by Surgeon Lieutenant Commander Shane Watson DSC, RANVR. Between the years 1953 and 1962, Watson completed various periods of annual continuous training (ACT). On 18 November 1957, Watson was awarded the Officers Volunteer Reserve Decoration (VRD). On 1 December 1960, he was appointed as the District Naval Medical Officer, New South Wales. On 8 April 1962, Watson resigned this position.

It is assumed with some surety that Watson continued his medical career until he was of an age to retire from the profession. Shane Andrew Clarke Watson, DSC, VRD, RANVR, passed away peacefully on 25 November 1994, aged 79. He was buried at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery, Springvale, Greater Dandenong City, at Cassia Plot, Garden 3, Tree 26.