



Lieutenant Colonel Clement Polson MANSON

[1909 - 1943]



Name: Clement Poulson **MANSON**

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel

Service Number: VX 48253

Unit: 2/3 Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur*

Service: Australian Army

Born: 24 May 1909; Newry, Vic

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

Please do not reproduce them or distribute them outside of the Club membership.

Enlisted:	25 July 1940; Caulfield, Vic	
Date of Death:	14 May 1943 (aged 33 years)	
Place of Death:	at sea, off Brisbane, Qld	
Cause of Death:	Drowned by enemy action	
Buried / Commemorated:	Sydney Memorial Rookwood Necropolis, NSW	[panel 1]
	Australian War Memorial	[panel 87]
NoK:	Son of James Allan and Jemima Mary Manson Husband of Margaret Elizabeth Manson of Toorak, Vic	

In Civilian Life:

At enlistment, lived at Hawthorn, Vic with his wife; and was a medical practitioner. He was a graduate of Scotch College and the University of Melbourne; and was known as “Clem”. “He had a reputation as a man with a love of the sea – he was a large man with a jolly, handsome, moustached face”

Military Service:

July 1940	Captain, 3 Division AMC
August 1940	2/1 Australian Hospital Ship <i>Manunda</i>
December 1940	to Middle East
June 1941	2/2 Australian Hospital Ship <i>Wanganella</i>
May 1942	Temporary Major
February 1943	2/3 Australian Hospital Ship <i>Centaur</i> , Administering Command
March 1943	Temporary Lieutenant Colonel, Officer Commanding Troops
May 1943	Reported “Missing believed drowned as a result of enemy action”
July 1943	Recorded as “Drowned as a result of enemy action”.

Circumstances of Death:

Lieutenant Colonel Manson was Commanding Officer of the ship’s staff of 2/3 Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur*. Whilst the ship was sinking, LTCOL Manson is reported to have been in full dress and equipment and very composed – assisting his nursing staff evacuate the ship. He was last seen jumping from the ship.

Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur* served as a medical transport between New Guinea and Australia. Before dawn on 14 May 1943, while on her second voyage, *Centaur* was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine off North Stradbroke Island, Queensland. The majority of the 332 aboard died in the attack; the 64 survivors had to wait for 36 hours before they were rescued. The incident resulted in public outrage as attacking a hospital ship was considered a war crime under the 1907 Hague Convention. Protests were made by the Australian and British governments to Japan and efforts were made to discover the people responsible so they could be tried at a war crimes tribunal. Despite this, it was not until the 1970s that identity of the attacking submarine, *I-177*, became public. The wreck of *Centaur* was found on 20 December 2009.

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Sundry web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents