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Ian Alexander Hesford

Thousands of "Welcome Home" functions took place across Australia during the Great War and for many months following the cessation of fighting in November 1918. In Kilmore perhaps the largest function took place at the Oddfellows Hall, on Friday June 6, 1919. The Kilmore Free Press reported that presentations were made to twenty seven soldiers, two nurses and one sailor, Ian Alexander Hesford, who was recognised then as the only sailor from the local district who served in World War One.

Ian Alexander Hesford was born at Albert Park on October 1, 1900, the only son of Alexander Elias and Mary Agnes Hesford (nee O'Reardon). Ian's sister Aileen was born in South Melbourne in 1899.

His father, Alexander, was a constable in the Victorian police and in early 1915 he was transferred to Kilmore as officer-in-charge, and as a war-time measure he replaced four officers as the only policeman in Kilmore. Young Ian continued his education at Assumption College, Kilmore and in early 1917 he was successful in passing the Junior Public Examination with distinctions in algebra and arithmetic.

In early 1918, while still a student at Assumption, Ian sat for the examination conducted by the Naval Board, for admission to the Navy as a cadet clerk in the Paymaster's Department. Only three positions were available and Ian was successful. He was appointed, and confirmed, on 15 March 1918 and was posted to HMAS Cerberus, a naval base south east of Melbourne, where he remained till May 1918.

During the War, Australia's naval role had been limited in supporting the Royal Navy. By late 1918 the RAN had expanded to include thirty seven ships, and over 5000 personnel, including the light cruiser HMAS Melbourne launched in 1912. In mid 1918 Ian travelled to London to join the Melbourne with the Grand Fleet patrolling the North Sea. After the war Melbourne remained berthed at Portsmouth until March when she sailed for Sydney.

Ian's next posting was to HMAS Sydney in August 1919 to February 1920, then back to HMAS Melbourne in April to June 1920 when he joined HMAS Australia. Just before he left the Australia to return to HMAS Melbourne in May 1921 Ian was promoted to Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant.

Perhaps the extra responsibility or the long periods away from land had taken its toll on Ian for on February 22, 1922 he was found guilty by a Court Martial on HMAS Melbourne of being drunk on board. Ian was held on shore at HMAS Platypus in Sydney, then transferred to HMAS Cerberus. His sentence of six months on half pay then termination of his appointment was approved by the Minister to commence from 14 March 1922.

His name appears on the Kilmore Shire Honour Roll in the Memorial Hall, Kilmore.

Ian married Edith C Cole at Mosman, NSW, in 1922 and died in Sutherland, NSW in 1970.



HMAS Melbourne, February 1919 Ian Alexander Hesford with hands in pockets on right

