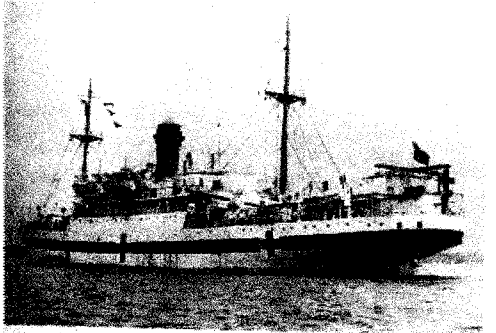# Atrocity!
## Hospital Ship Centaur Sunk Off Queensland Coast

### By Amanda Wheatley



On Friday morning at around 4a.m. *HMA Hospital Ship Centaur* was hit by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine. The *Centaur* sank just off the coast of Moreton Island, near Brisbane.

Of the 332 crew and staff on board, only 64 managed to survive. This included Sister Ellen Savage, the only survivor of the twelve nursing staff on the ship. The survivors had to wait for 35 hours in shark infested water until the USS Mugford arrived to take them to safety after being spotted clinging to wreckage by a plane passing overhead.

The *Centaur* left Sydney Harbour on Wednesday the 12th May and was headed for Port Moresby where she was to pick up casualties from the Buna and Gona battles. There were no patients on board at the time of the sinking.

Earlier this year, the *Centaur* had been converted from a passenger ship into a hospital ship. She had been outfitted with red crosses and green lines on her hull, with additional crosses on her funnel and stern, to indicate that she was a hospital ship.

The midnight watch on the 14th noted that the night was very clear, so there is no doubt that the attack was deliberate. Prime Minister Curtin issued this statement late yesterday *"The attack which took place a few miles of the Queensland coast bears all the marks of wantonness and deliberation. Not only will it stir our people into a more acute realisation of the type of enemy against whom we are fighting, but I am confident that this deed will shock the conscience of the whole civilized world and demonstrate to any who may have had any lingering doubts the unscrupulous and barbarous methods by which the Japanese conduct warfare."*