

Page 9 - Significant People 2013

Basic HTML Version

[Table of Contents](#) | [View Full Version](#)

The Leask Brothers

Private Harold Medcalf Leask (NX27346)
(19 June 1910 - 14 May 1943)

Private Alexander Richie Alex Leask (NX27345)
(5 September 1911 - 14 May 1943)

Private Henry Henderson Harry Leask (NX27347)
(8 August 1912 - 14 May 1943)

Privates Harold, Alex and Harry Leask of Macquarie Road, Greystanes all lost their lives on the hospital ship Centaur on 14 May 1943.

The Leask boys, with their brother Malcolm, enlisted together in the A.I.F. on 19 June 1940 at Paddington. They received consecutive army numbers and all four brothers saw two years service at Darwin together.

Harold, Alex and Harry were part of the 192-member contingent of the 2/12 Field Ambulance, travelling on the Centaur to New Guinea to set up field medical units. Also on board were 75 Merchant Navy crew plus the ship's army medical staff, comprising 8 Officers, 12 Nurses and 45 other ranks.

The A.H.S. Centaur sailed from Sydney at 9.45 am on 12 May 1943. At approximately 4.10 pm on 14 May, the Japanese submarine I-177 fired a torpedo at the Centaur, despite being clearly marked as a hospital ship in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The torpedo struck the Centaur on the port side, a tremendous explosion rocked the ship and fire broke out. Most of the personnel on board were asleep below decks.

Of the 332 persons on board, there were 64 survivors.

The three Leask boys were all single and in their early twenties at the time of their deaths. Their brother Malcolm was serving with at the 103rd Australian General Hospital, though by October 1945, at the time of his discharge, Malcolm was serving with the 2/12 Field Ambulance.

The Leask boys were described Ald. George Maunder, Mayor of Holroyd as, "...fine, typical young Australians, and their loss is a sad blow to the district."

The Leask brothers are remembered in three of the plaques along Memorial Avenue, Merrylands, honouring those Holroyd servicemen who paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

The wreck of the Australian Hospital Ship Centaur was located in December 2009, approximately 30 miles due east of the southern tip of Moreton Island, at a depth of 2,059 metres.

A Memorial plaque was placed on the Centaur on 12 January 2010, and three days later the Australian Government listed the site as a war grave and established a 200 hectare exclusion zone around the wreck.



Page 8