

## HMAS Cowra J351/M351



Namesake: Town of Cowra, NSW  
 Builder: Poole & Steel  
 Laid down: 12 August 1942  
 Launched: 27 May 1943  
 Commissioned: 8 October 1943  
 Decommissioned: 4 December 1946  
 Recommissioned: 20 February 1951  
 Decommissioned: 26 June 1953  
 Reclassified: Training ship (1951)

Battle honours:  
 Pacific 1943–45  
 New Guinea 1944

Fate: Sold for scrap in 1961



Class & type: Bathurst-class corvette  
 Displacement: 650 tons (standard),  
 1,025 tons (full war  
 load)  
 Length: 186 ft (57 m)  
 Beam: 31 ft (9.4 m)  
 Draught: 10 ft (3.0 m)  
 Propulsion: triple expansion  
 engine,  
 2 shafts  
 Speed: 15.5 knots  
 (28.7 km/h; 17.8 mph)  
 Complement: 85  
 Armament:  
 1 × QF 4-inch (102 mm) Mk XIX  
 gun  
 3 × 20 mm Oerlikons

HMAS Cowra was laid down at Poole & Steel Ltd, Sydney, NSW on 12 August 1942. She was launched on 27 May 1943 by Mrs Spender, wife of a member of the Australian Advisory War Council, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the town in the Central West region of New South Wales.



*The Minister for the Navy, the Hon NJO Makin MP with the launching lady, Mrs Spender, wife of a member of the Australian Advisory War Council, at the launching of Cowra at Poole & Steel's Dockyard, Balmain, NSW on 27 May 1943. (AWM 305506)*





*On Slipway ready to launch*

Cowra was commissioned on 8 October 1943 under the command of Acting Lieutenant Commander William John Gillies RANR. Cowra began her operational career in November 1943, escorting convoys on the east coast of Australia.



*HMAS Cowra. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)*

In March 1944 she transferred to the New Guinea theatre and took up escort and anti-submarine patrol duties until June 1944, when she proceeded to Melbourne for refit.



*Left: Able Seaman Magnuson and Able Seaman F Beencke, painting the side of HMAS Cowra, Right: Ratings painting the side of HMAS Cowra*

On 19 August 1944 Cowra departed Melbourne to return to New Guinea waters reaching Milne Bay at the close of the month. The following eleven months (excepting a brief visit to Brisbane in February 1945) were spent on patrol and escort, mainly in the Morotai area.

The early months of 1945 were spent operating, between Sorido and Mios-Woendi. Some relief from the monotony of routine patrolling was gained in January 1945 when she bombarded Japanese held positions at Yalela Bay in the Northern Halmaheras. On 17 July 1945 Cowra's wartime service in the forward areas came to an end when she departed Langemak for Melbourne.



*HMAS Cowra in company with ML325 during a lighter moment in waters off Madang when permission was given for 'hands to bathe'.*





*Informal portrait of ship's company of HMAS Cowra, circa June 1945. (AWM 109984)*



**LEFT TO RIGHT:- SUB LIEUTENANT T. G. QUINN OF SYDNEY, NSW (1); LIEUTENANT A. FARQUHAR-SMITH, COMMANDER (2); LT W. R. BOYD OF MELBOURNE, VIC (3); SUB-LT G. H. TAYLOR OF GEELONG, VIC (4).**



*TARAKAN ISLAND. 1945-06-22. HMAS Cowra AND CREW, PREVIOUSLY ENGAGED IN MINESWEEPING AND CONVOY WORK ROUND TARAKAN ISLAND, BEGAN PREPARATIONS FOR A TRIP TO MOROTAI. SHOWN, MEMBERS OF THE CREW PRACTICING GUN DRILL ON THE SHIP'S MAIN ARMAMENT, A 4 INCH M19 QF GUN. IDENTIFIED PERSONNEL ARE:- PM4633 ABLE SEAMAN C. D. HEARD (1); 21756 PETTY OFFICER J. L. GRAY (2); B2344 ABLE SEAMAN H. W. MOESSINGER (3); PM2160 LEADING SEAMAN N. R. GERRARD (4); PM3489 ABLE SEAMAN E. A. THOMPSON (5); PM6741 ABLE SEAMAN N. B. SHEPHERD (6); PA4352 ABLE SEAMAN I. S. SMOKER (7)*



*CREW OF A 40MM BOFORS ANTI AIRCRAFT GUN AFT AT ACTION STATIONS DURING GUN DRILL. IDENTIFIED PERSONNEL ARE, EFT TO RIGHT: S4059 ABLE SEAMAN H. H. THAXTON (1); 16610 ABLE SEAMAN W. A. SPARKS (2); S5854 ABLE SEAMAN G. BEATTIE (3); F2810 ABLE SEAMAN D. A. DILLON-SMITH, SITTING (4); PM6048 ABLE SEAMAN G. H. HUNTER, BEHIND (5).*

In the post-war period *Cowra* joined the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla and took part in mine clearance operations on the east coast of Australia and off Hobart, New Britain and the Solomon Islands.



*HMAS Cowra wearing the 'number 20' on her funnel signifying that she was a part of the 20th Minesweeping Flotilla. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)*

This phase of her career ended on 2 December 1946 when she reached Sydney to pay off, after steaming some 90,000 miles. She paid off on 4 December 1946. On 20 February 1951 *Cowra* recommissioned as a Training Ship for National Service Ratings.



*HMAS Cowra. (Allan C Green, State Library of Victoria)*



*Mrs A Hewett of Hartwell, Victoria, says goodbye to her son John as he is about to leave on National Service duty on HMAS Cowra for three weeks of training. (Argus Newspaper Collection of Photographs, State Library of Victoria)*







*Ship's company of HMAS Cowra, circa 1951.*

The ship remained in active seagoing commission until 15 May 1953 when she commenced paying off into dockyard control after steaming a further 50,000 miles, bringing her seagoing career to a close.

*Cowra* finally paid off on 26 June 1953 into Dockyard Hands, Williamstown. She was sold out of service 6 January 1961 to Kino Shito (Aust) Pty Ltd.

21 May 1962, along with *Kapunda* and *Rockhampton*, the ship departed Sydney under tow of tug *Benton Maru*. Broken up Japan.

