HMAS *Inverell* – J233/M233

Namesake:	Town of Inverell,
NSW Builder:	Mort's Dock
Laid down:	7 December 1941
Launched:	2 May 1942
Commissioned:	17 September 1942
Decommissioned:	14 June 1946

Transferred to RNZN

Acquired:	5 March 1952
Commissioned:	10 April 1952
Decommissioned:	1952
Recommissioned:	15 August 1965
Decommissioned:	19 August 1976
Reclassified:	Training and fisheries protection vessel

Battle honours:
Darwin 1942
Pacific 1942–45

Fate:
Sold for scrap on 1 November 1977

Displacement:	650 tons standard 1,025 tons full load
Length:	186 ft (57 m)
Beam:	31 ft (9.4 m)
Draught:	8.5 ft (2.6 m)
Propulsion:	triple expansion engine,2 shafts, 2,000 hp
Speed:	15 knots (28 km/h; 17 mph) at 1,750 hp
Complement:	85
Armament:	1 × 4-inch gun 3 × 20 mm Oerlikons (later reduced to 2) 1 × 40 mm Bofors (installed later) Machine guns Depth charges chutes and throwers

HMAS *Inverell* was laid down at Mort's Dock Engineering Company, Balmain, Sydney, NSW on 7 December 1941. She was launched on 2 May 1942 by Mrs TS Punch, the Mayoress of *Inverell*, and was the first RAN warship to carry the name of the northern NSW town. By the war's end Mort's Dock had constructed fourteen of the sixty Bathurst class Corvettes.

Guyra Argus (NSW) Thu 7 May 1942:

HMAS *Inverell*

The launching of the HMAS *Inverell* will take place within the next few days. The Mayor and Mayoress of *Inverell*, Dr. and Mrs. T. S. Punch, and the Town Clerk and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Inch, will be present at the ceremony. As the Aldermen decided that the Council should not incur any of the expense involved, the visitors will pay their own expenses.

Mrs TS Punch, the Mayoress of Inverell, launching HMAS Inverell on 2 May 1942 at Mort's Dock & Engineering Co Ltd, Sydney.

HMAS Inverell launching.

HMAS *Inverell* commissioned at Sydney on 17 September 1942 under the command of Lieutenant John R Suffren RANR(S).

After a period of working up the ship commenced her operational service on 7 November when she departed Sydney to assume escort duty with a Melbourne bound convoy. Escort duty on the Australian east coast occupied her until the end of December, when she sailed from Sydney to take up similar duties in northern waters.

For ten months *Inverell* was employed mainly in running between Thursday Island and Darwin, with one trip to Onslow in February 1943. On 11 November 1943 *Inverell* arrived at Williamstown Naval Dockyard to undergo a refit. She sailed for the north again on 16 December to resume convoy escort and patrol duties.

Early in February 1944 *Inverell* rescued eight survivors from a United States Army Air Force Liberator bomber which had crashed on Croker Island, Northern Territory. The pilot, who had been seriously injured, died on board and the remaining seven survivors were landed in Darwin. Except for a period between May and July 1945 and brief visits in 1945 and 1946, *Inverell*'s service in northern Australian waters came to an end on 22 September 1944, when she sailed for Fremantle.

The ship was based at Fremantle until May 1945 and continued her routine escort and patrol duties, but was mainly engaged in exercising with United States Navy and Royal Navy submarines operating from Western Australia.

On 4 May *Inverell* departed Fremantle for Darwin, where she arrived on 22 May. After a period occupied with minesweeping and exercises the ship sailed from Darwin on 11 July, towing the Services Reconnaissance Department vessel HMAS *River Snake*, accompanied by *Inverell*'s sister ship HMAS *Stawell* as Senior Officer. Late in the voyage *River Snake* proceeded under her own power and the other two ships arrived at Morotai on 17 July. *Inverell* was occupied mainly on patrol duties until the end of hostilities on 15 August.

HMAS River Snake

With the end of hostilities the ship remained busily occupied with various duties related to the assumption of control of Netherlands East Indies territory from the Japanese. A Port Directorate was established in *Inverell* from 21 September to 18 November, with her Commanding Officer as Port Director Macassar. The ship's duties in that period took her to Borneo, Amboina and Morotai.

HMAS Inverell comes alongside HMS Maidstone with prisoners of war, Royal Navy seaman from HMS Exeter, HMS Encounter and HMS Stronghold.

On 29 November 1945 the ship sailed from Morotai for Australia. After a month's duty mainly on the Queensland coast, including a brief visit out of the state's waters to Grafton, *Inverell* arrived at Brisbane on 25 December 1945 to commence preparations for paying off into Reserve. Various factors made this process a somewhat protracted one and the ship did not pay off until 14 June 1946. She had steamed 93,720 miles since commissioning.

Daily Mercury (Mackay Qld) Mon 18 Mar 1946:

STRANDED SHIP

The corvette, HMAS *Inverell* arrived at the harbour at 7 a.m. on Saturday to attempt to re-float the Army vessel which went aground a fortnight ago. The stranded vessel was partially floated at the height of the tide, the bows being slewed round facing the water. Further efforts snapped the tow ropes, and work was suspended with the stern of the vessel still embedded in the sand. The whole ship was high and dry at low water.

Inverell flying paying off pennant

On 4 November 1947 *Inverell*'s sister ship HMAS *Echuca* departed Brisbane with *Inverell* under tow. The ship arrived at Sydney on 17 November 1947. *Inverell* remained in Reserve at Sydney until 1952.

Inverell and three of her sister ships (*Echuca*, *Kiama* and *Stawell*) were presented by the Australian Government to the New Zealand Government on 5 March 1952.

Inverell with HMNZS Kiwi alongside at Garden Island

H.M.A.S. INVERELL

Inverell preparing for hand over at Garden Island

Official Guests arriving for the hand over to New Zealand at Garden Island

At Garden Island Naval Base, Sydney, the Minister for Defence Hon PA McBride, handed over the vessel to the New Zealand High Commissioner, Mr GEL Alderton. HMAS Inverell then sailed for New Zealand waters under a steaming party of officers and men of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Inverell commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Navy at Sydney on 5 April 1952.

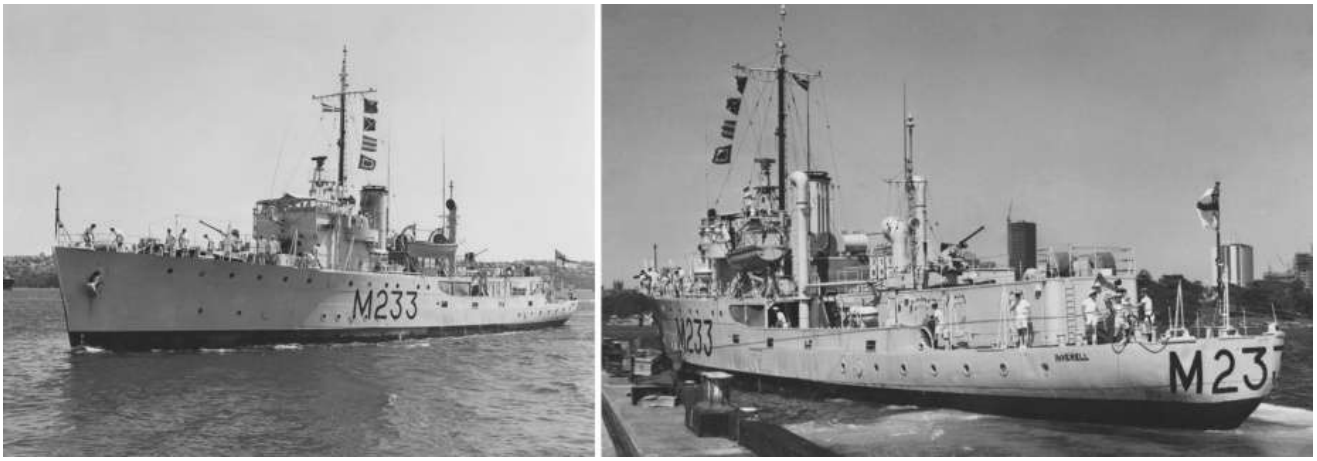
The New Zealand High Commissioner, Mr GEL Alderton, leaves Inverell after she was handed over by the Australian Minister for Defence, the Hon PA McBride

Departed Sydney 10 April 1952 for Port Chalmers for a refit by Stevenson and Cook Eng, arriving 16 April 1952 almost out of fuel. Paid off 17 April 1952. Recommissioned 29 September 1952 and arrived Auckland 8 Oct 1952.

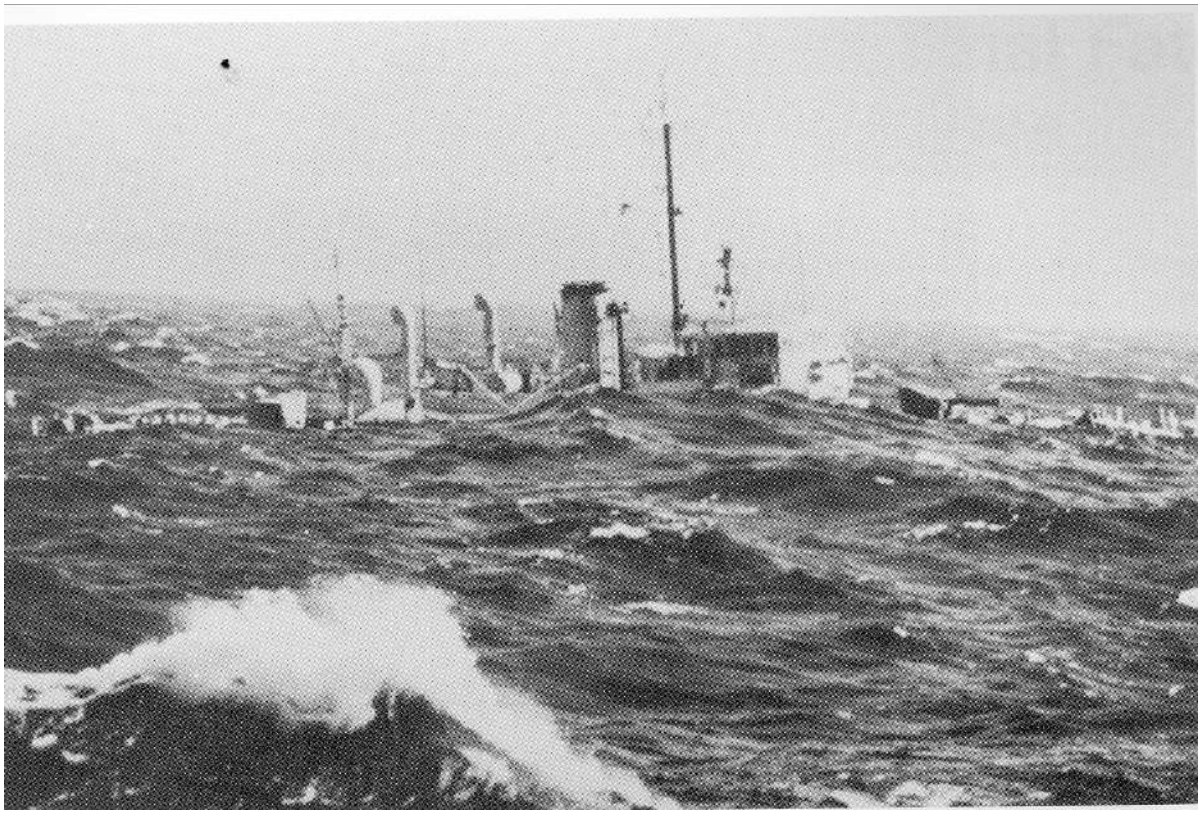
17 October 1952 paid off and she was again placed in Reserve.

In 1965 she began a refit to convert her for training and fisheries patrol duties as a replacement for HMNZS *Rotoiti*. Her accommodation was extended aft.

On 15 August 1965 Inverell recommissioned at Auckland



HMNZS Inverell



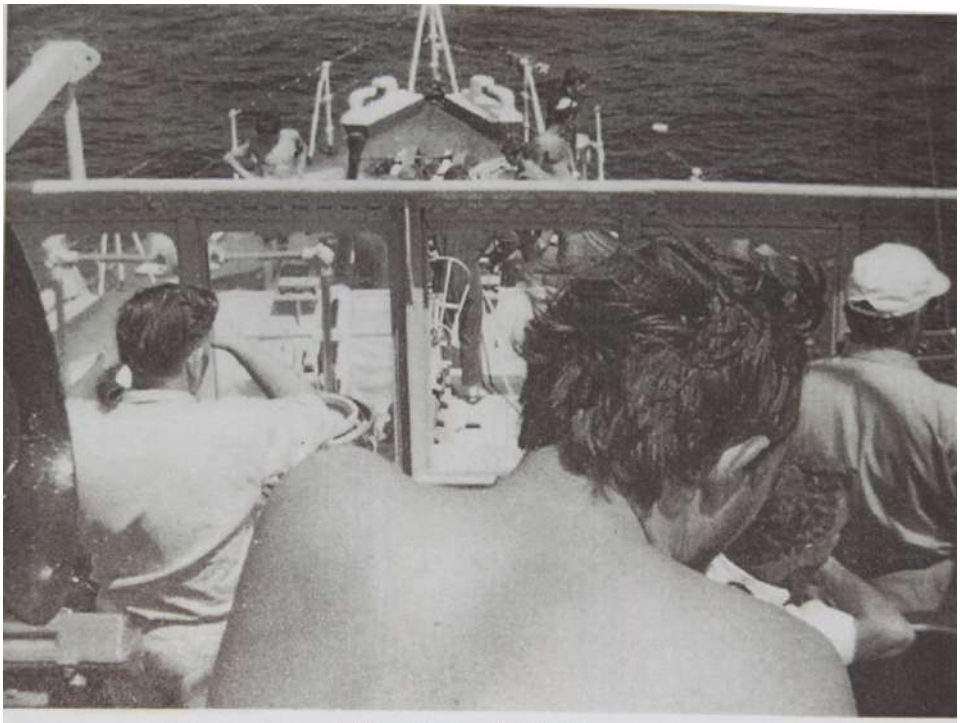
Inverell in heavy seas in the Tasman Sea

On 1 August 1968 during annual exercise's *Inverell* was involved in a collision with the USS Henry B Wilson with damage to the bow.

USS Henry B Wilson

Inverell's bent bow

HMNZS Inverell



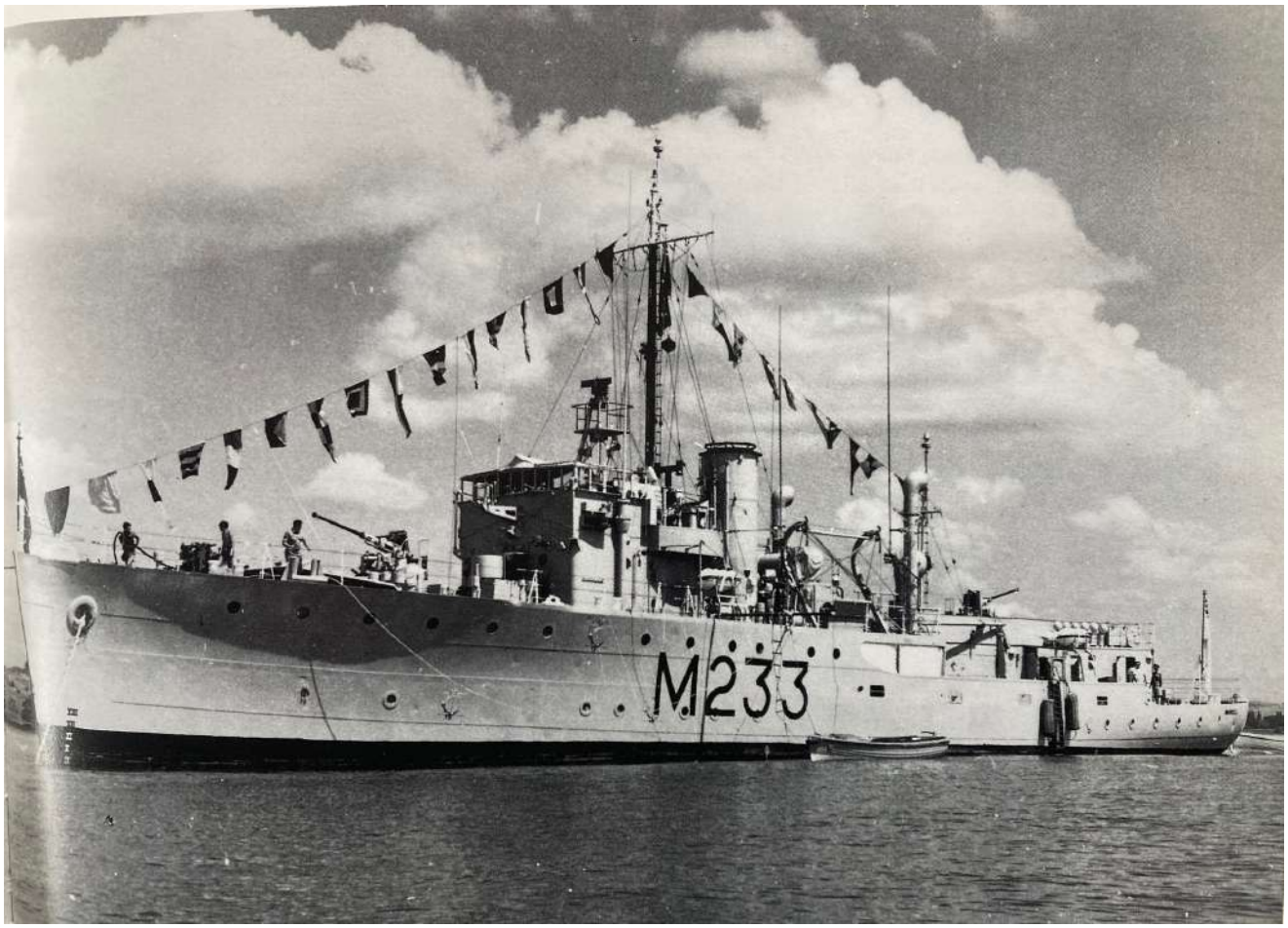
View from the bridge

Note the noisy ventilation fan above this man's head

HMNZS Inverell

Inverell ship's company

M233


M233

Arrival Auckland flying paying off pennant

Inverell paid off at Devonport Naval Base, Auckland, on 19 August 1976. On 1 November 1977 the ship was sold for scrap to Pacific Scrap Limited. Broken up Auckland 1978.