

HMAS *Stawell* – J348/M348



Namesake: Town of Stawell, Vic
Builder: HMA Naval Dockyard
Laid down: 18 June 1942
Launched: 3 April 1943
Commissioned: 7 August 1943
Decommissioned: 26 March 1946
Motto: "Without Fear or Favour"

Battle honours:
 Pacific 1943–45
 New Guinea 1943–44
 Borneo 1945

Fate: Sold to RNZN
New Zealand
Acquired: 5 March 1952
Decommissioned: Late 1950s
Fate: Sold for scrap in 1968



Displacement: 650 tons standard
 1,025 tons full war 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: Machine guns
 Depth charges
 chutes and

throwers

Stawell was laid down on 18 June 1942 at Williamstown, Victoria and launched on 3 April 1943 by Mrs Dedman, wife of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry.



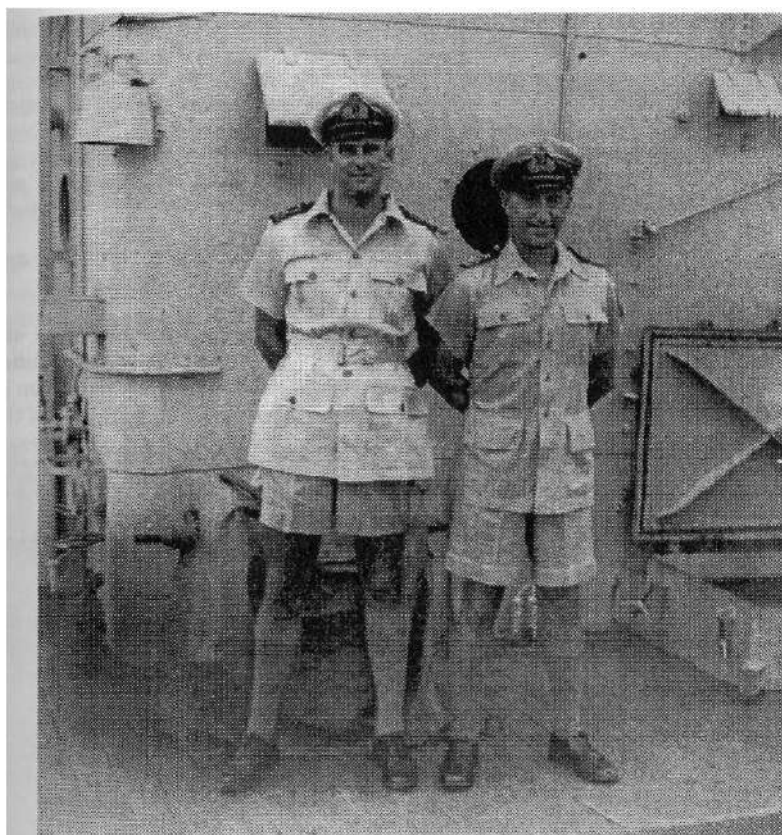
Mrs Dedman names Stawell on 3 April 1943.

The corvette commissioned at Melbourne on 7 August 1943 under the command of Lieutenant Sidney J Griffith RANR(S).





*Stawell slides down the ways and into the water at Williamstown, Victoria on 3 April 1943.
(AWM 138493)*



*HMAS STAWELL's Executive Officers:
Lieutenant Alan Edwards RANR, First Lieutenant
Lieutenant Commander Sydney Griffith RANR (S), Commanding Officer.
(Photo loaned by Alan Edwards)*

Lt. Cmdr. Sydney Griffith

Following trials in the Melbourne area, the ship was engaged in escorting convoys on the Australian east coast and to and from New Guinea ports. From commissioning until the end of hostilities on 15 August 1945, a considerable proportion of *Stawell's* service was in the New Guinea area, her varied duties including, in addition to escort work, patrolling and assistance to land forces by bombardment.



HMAS STAWELL's original 4" gun's crew

Back row (from left): Lieutenant Gwynne, our first Gunnery Officer; AB Mentiplay (Perth), AB Stakelum (Melbourne), Ldg Smn C. Farrell (Grafton), Ldg Smn J. Hobson (Geelong), AB K. Dean (Melbourne).

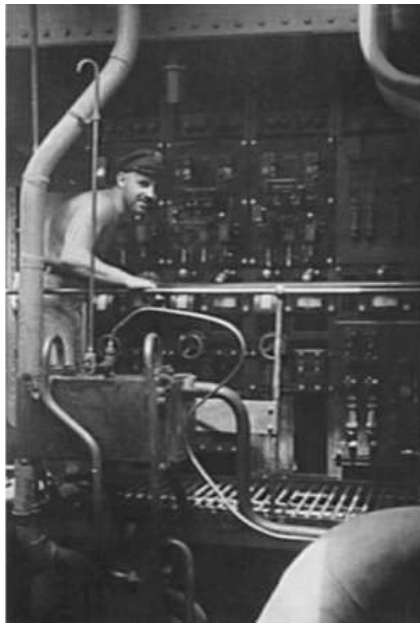
Front row: AB R. Smilie (Melbourne), AB J. McAvaney (Adelaide), AB H. Carbis (Melbourne), AB E. Hourigan (Sydney), AB A. Moffitt (Sydney).



Left: Directional flashing light was routinely used during World War II to pass signals between

ships. Right: One of Stawell's officers takes a navigational fix while on watch on the bridge.

On 18 December 1943, *Stawell*, in company with HMA Ships *Gympie* and *Gladstone*, were escorting a convoy of eight merchant vessels with troops embarked bound for Milne Bay when seven of the eight ships, along with *Gladstone*, ran aground on Bougainville Reef in the Great Barrier Reef just after 9:30 that evening. *Gladstone* refloated herself within the hour and the three escorts took up station just off the reef until daybreak. The vessels *Colorado*, *Ambrose Bierce* and *City of Fortworth* had all managed to free themselves by dawn and, with HMA Ships *Lithgow* and *Castlemaine* arriving to assist, and her own starboard propeller damaged, *Gladstone* detached at just after 7:00am to escort the trio back to Cairns.



Left: Sub Lieutenant A Keogh, Humboldt Bay, New Guinea, circa November 1944. Centre: Chief Engine Room Artificer RF Shaw at work on Stawell's switchboard. Right: Able Seaman McGuinness at the helm while on passage in the Pacific.

Stawell, along with *Lithgow*, *Gympie* and *Castlemaine*, began disembarking troops from the stricken vessels at just after 9:00am. All the troops were transferred by 11.30 that morning and the remaining ships were quickly refloated suffering varying degrees of damage.

In April 1944 she rendered assistance, with other ships, to the United States vessel *Frederick Billings* (operated by the US War Shipping Administration), which had gone aground in Milne Bay.

The following month saw *Stawell* in action against Japanese forces on Kar Kar Island, north east of Madang, and later escorting convoys between Madang, Manus Island, Humboldt Bay and Langemak. In August 1944 she ended patrol duty to return to Melbourne for a refit.

The Horsham Times (Vic) Tue 23 May 1944:

HMAS *Stawell* in Action

Residents of Stawell were interested to hear that HMAS *Stawell*, named after the Borough of Stawell had been in a successful action. Details of the part being played by units of the RAN in operations on the in north coast of New Guinea were announced by Mr. Makin

Minister for the Navy. In close support of Australian land forces advancing along the coast. Mr Makin said HMAS's Barcoo (Lt.-Cdr A. J. Travis, RAN) Kapunda (Lieut. C M. Callow, RAN) and Stawell (Lieut. S. J. Griffiths, RANR(S)) carried out a systematic bombardment of enemy positions on Karkat Island and at Bunabin Harbor. On May 12 HMAS Stawell shelled positions at close range, the shells falling well on the target area, and the enemy retaliating with light and inaccurate fire.

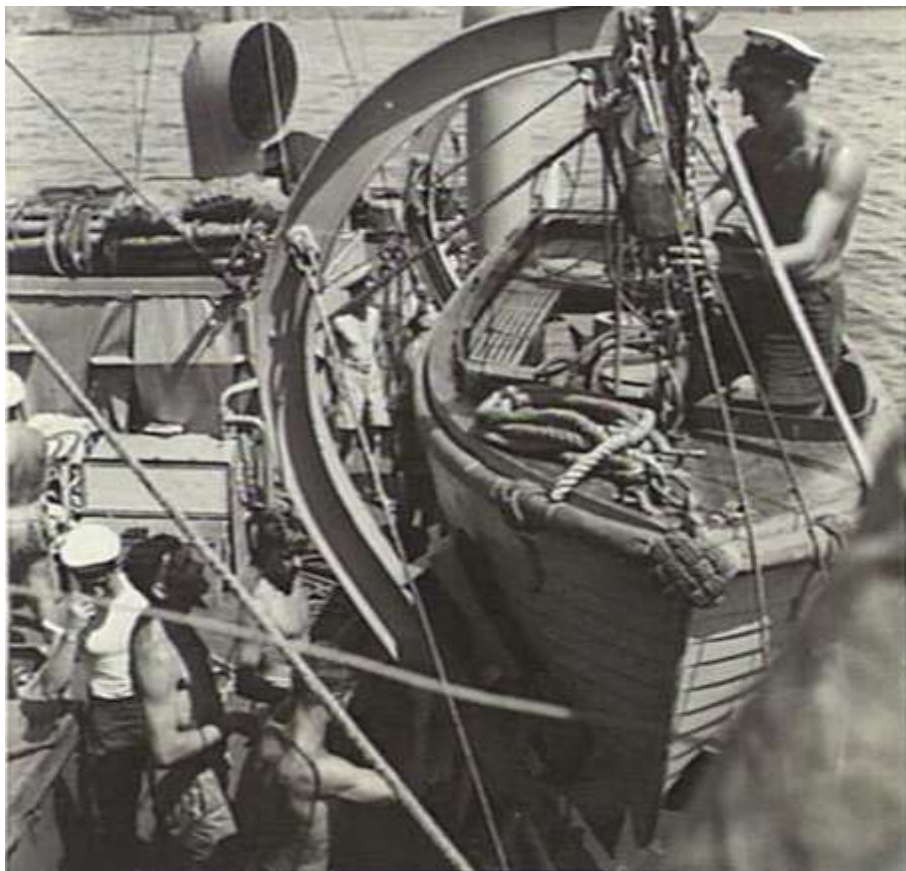
Stawell was back in the New Guinea area in October 1944 on convoy and minesweeping duties. During July and August 1945 she was at Morotai and Balikpapan. On 3 August 1945, in the Moluccas area, she attacked and sank a Japanese armed barge.



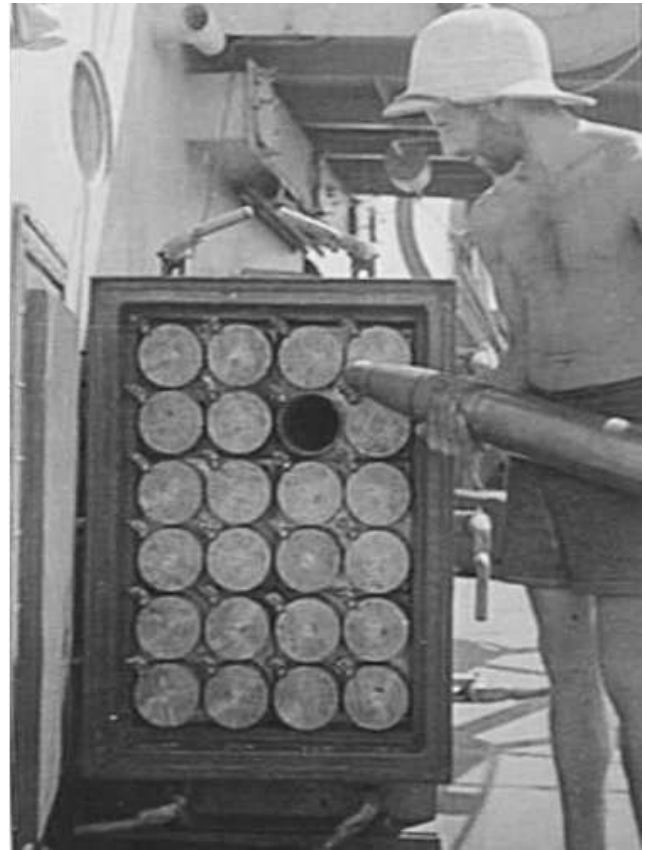
Left: Stawell's ship's company, circa 1944. (AWM P00636.002) Right: Stawell in Langamak Bay, New Guinea in 1944. (AWM P00636.002)



Crew Fishing 1944



Lowering motor Boat 1944

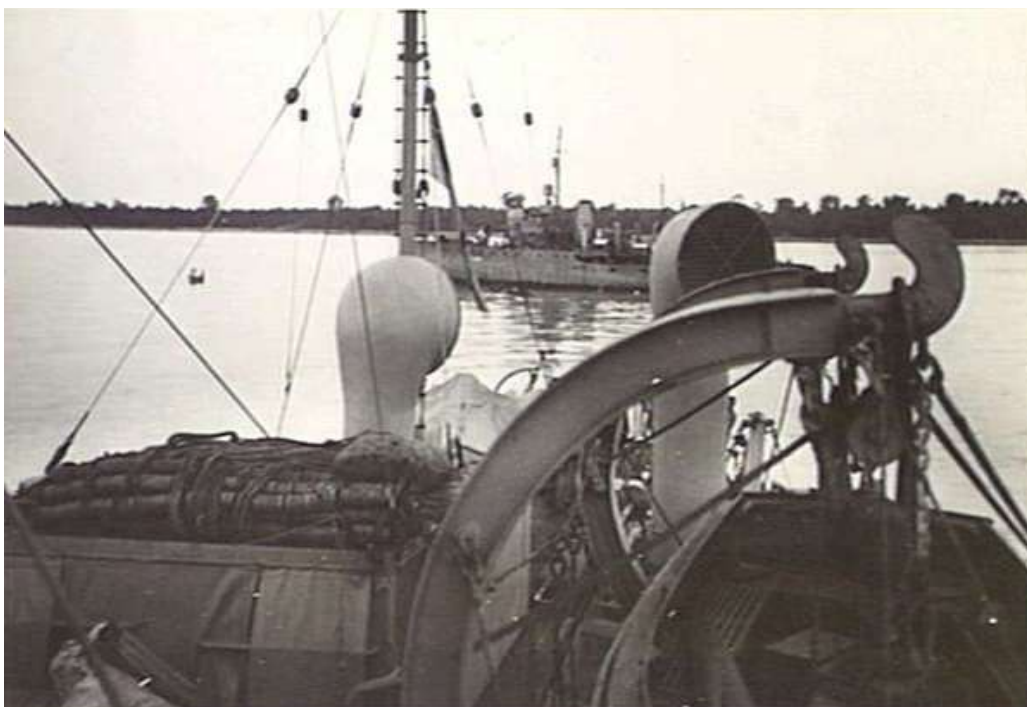


Left: Stawell's 4-inch gun showing breech block and gun shield. Right: To expedite bringing the gun into action, ammunition was kept close by in ready-use lockers fixed on the upper deck. Here Able Seaman J Rapkins can be seen replenishing the locker.





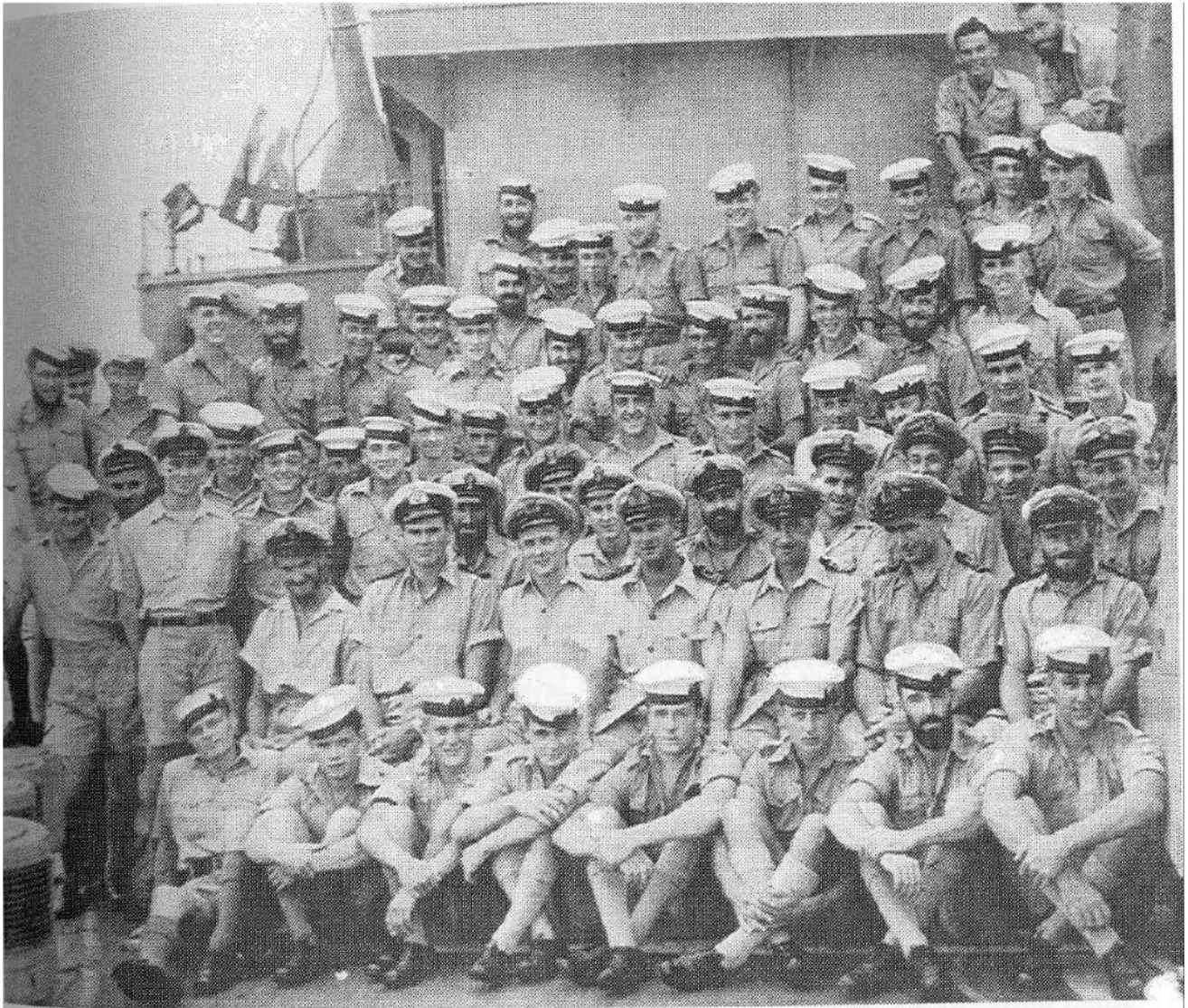
9 Nov 1944. Preparing to tow US PT 227 at Tenah Merah Bay to Mios Woendi



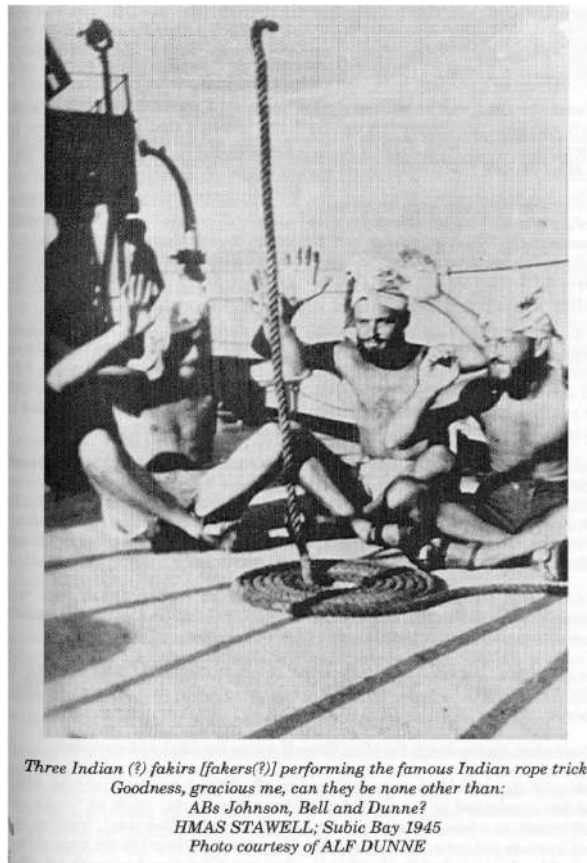
10 Nov 1944 attempting to tow HMAS Glenelg off a sandbar at Mios Woendi

Stawell departed Morotai on 19 August 1945 for Subic Bay in the Philippines, arriving on 22 August 1945. On 26 September she sailed for Hong Kong, and on 28 September 1945 Arrived in Hong Kong as part of the British Pacific Fleet.

The ship remained in the Hong Kong area conducting anti-piracy patrols until leaving with other ships of the 21st Minesweeping Flotilla for Morotai on 17 October.



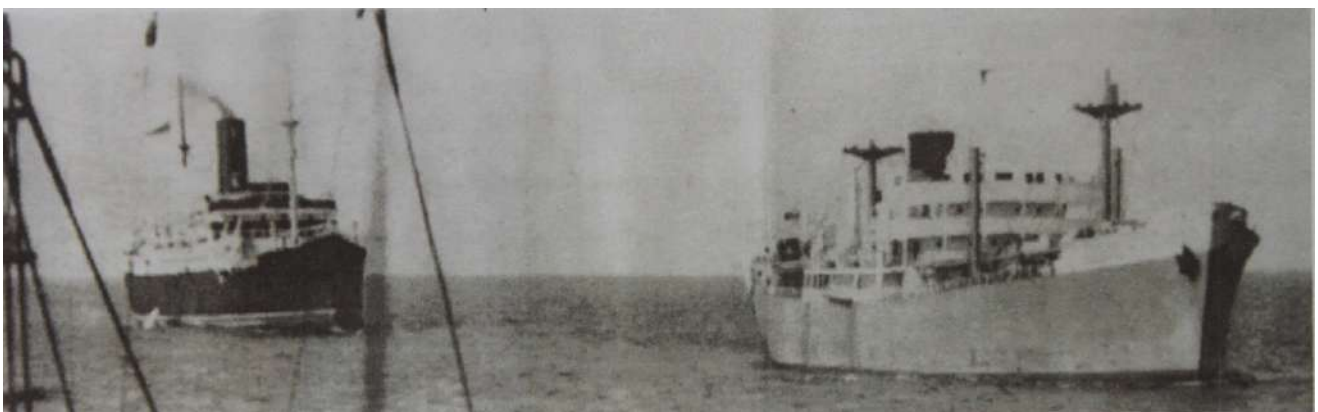
STAWELL's ship's company
Morotai, 1945



1 November 1945 *Stawell* arrived at Brisbane, 14 February 1945 started to de-store ship for Paying Off. Paid off on 26 March 1946, having steamed 75,723 miles.

Stawell was transferred to the Royal New Zealand Navy 8 May 1952 and commissioned as HMNZS *Stawell*. Departed for Auckland 14 May 1952, arriving 20 May 1952. Paid off 21 May 1952. 12 June 1952 sent to Mason Bros. for refitting, refit completed 27 February 1953 and placed in reserve. 12 July 1955 Recommissioned for training for reservists.

12 June 1957 *Stawell* urgently put to sea to stand by the broken down immigrant ship *Captain Hobson* during its five day tow from off East Cape to Auckland by the cargo ship *Port Maquarie* arriving 18 June 1957

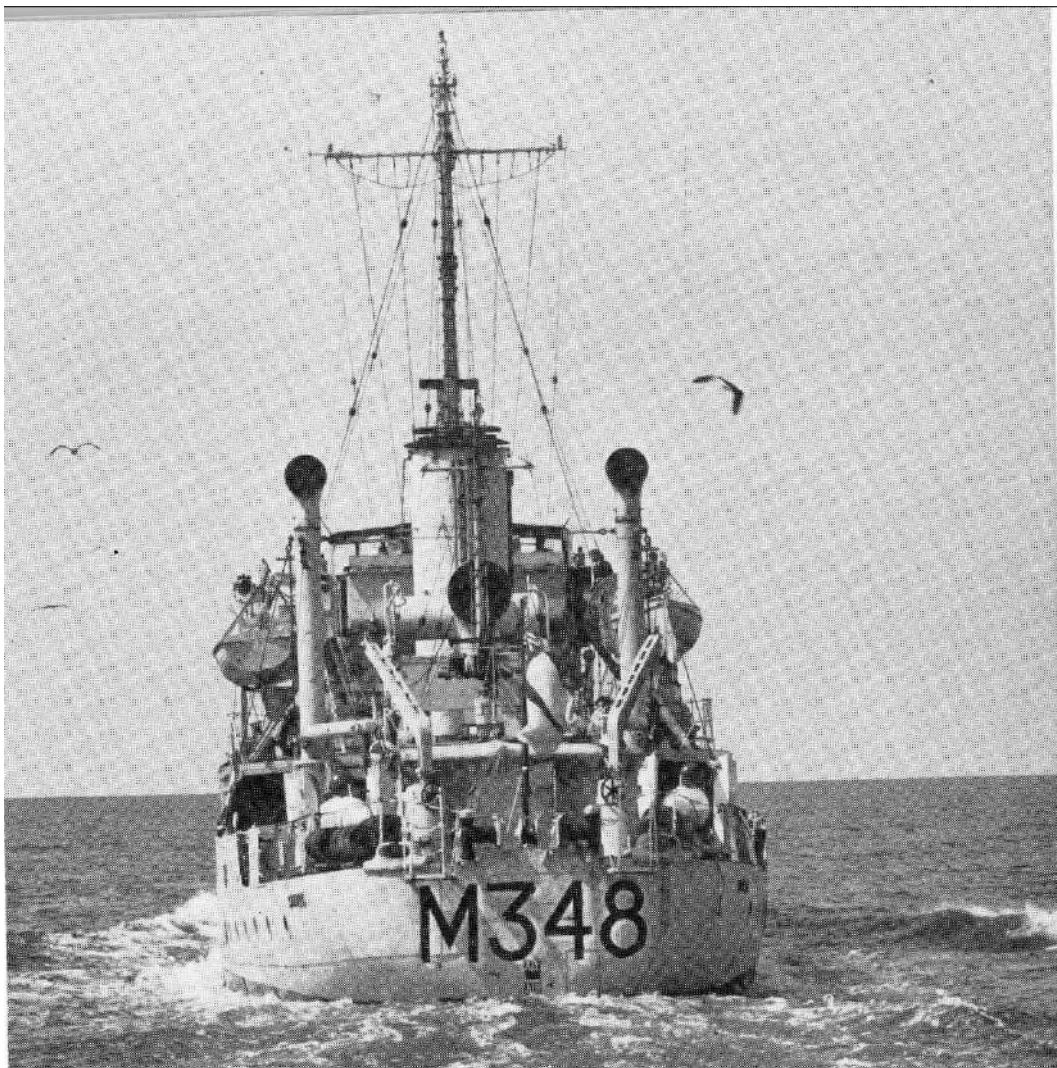
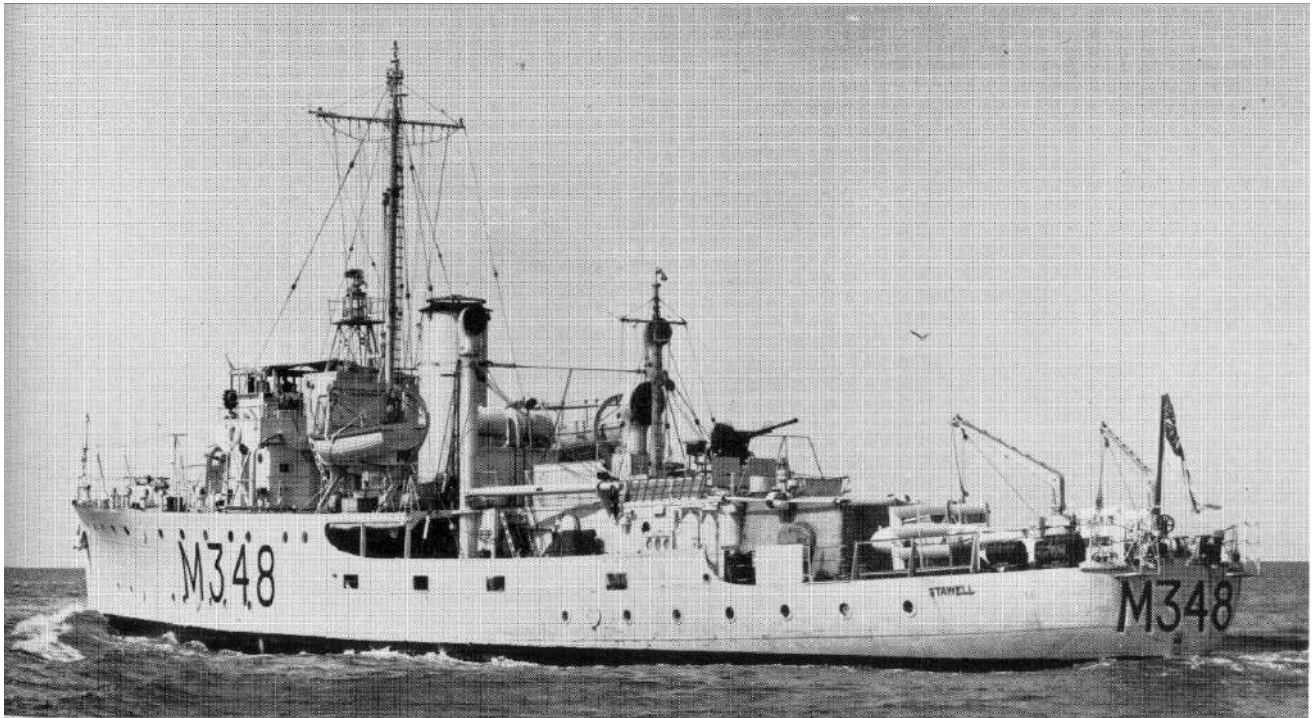


Captain Hobson and Port Maquarie taken from HMNZS Stawell



HMNZS Stawell at Bluff





Stawell paid off to reserve 4 July 1959.



7 Aug 1968 the ship was sold to Pacific Scrap Ltd of Auckland, then broken up.