



# CASTLEMAINE CAPERS

An Occasional Newsletter

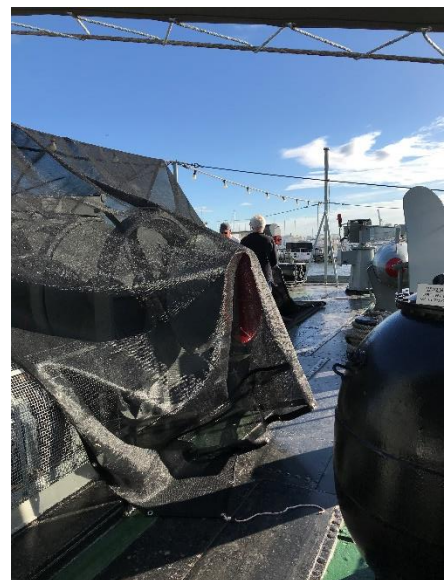
Issue 4 – July 2023

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Welcome to the latest edition of our occasional newsletter.

I would like to start by focusing on another of our ongoing administrative tasks. That is documenting, saving and presenting information about the many men who served on board *Castlemaine* whilst in commission. It is an interesting and constantly evolving process as new information comes to light. On board we have hard copy records in folders of every man known to have served on the ship. Interestingly we are still finding men we were unaware of, there have been three over the last two years. Having the folders readily available allows our volunteers manning the ship on open days to have instant access as we occasionally get visitors who had a relative who served on the ship and are unaware of the records, we can then make copies for them. As well as the paper copies we have digital copies saved on the ship's computer. The records include copies of original service records and service certificates as well as any other document with relevance to an individual. And, most importantly, any photos of the men. Photos put a human face on the words written on paper and give us a chance to visualise what these, mostly young, men went through. As you can imagine we are always on the lookout for photos and only back in March I made contact with the son of Lt G S Gordon who served on the ship in 1944. As we didn't have a photo of his father he was able to provide one for our records. Photos of original crew members are also on our website at [hmascastlemaine.org.au](http://hmascastlemaine.org.au)

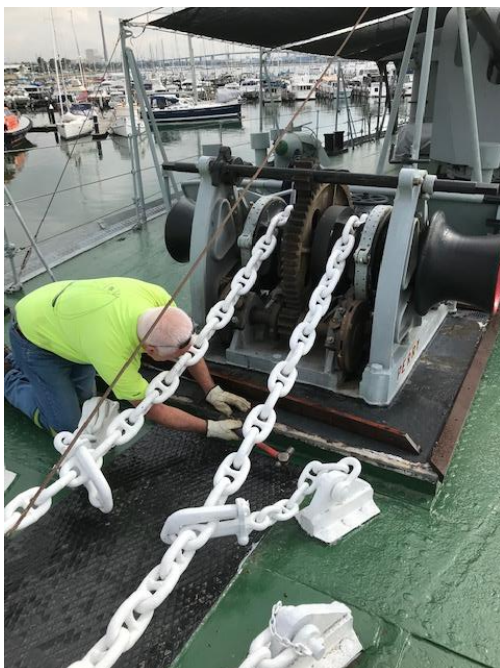
Following on from my promise in the last newsletter we have some photos from 18<sup>th</sup> April of the annual event 'Taking Down The Awnings'. In the past this event has provided almost as many laughs (and tears) as 'Putting Up The Awnings'.





However this year it was completed with very little fuss, much to the chagrin of the photographer who was hoping for some bloopers. Seriously though, crew members Mike, Noel & Dennis worked like a well-oiled machine and stowed away the awnings ready for putting them up next November. We now have a 'fail safe' tagging system that ensures that each event occurs efficiently. Thank you to the crew members who designed and implemented the system.

You may remember from the last newsletter that Mike was refurbishing the plinth of the windlass on the foredeck and its timber edging. This job is now complete and should not require touching for a few years. Below is Mike putting finishing touches to the job and the finished product.





Another job mentioned in the last newsletter was the refurbishment of the Southern Cross diesel, which is an original piece of equipment. As with all old machinery there is always something that tests you and in this case it was originally the fuel pump and injectors that had Geoff tearing his hair out and then the realisation that a new set of head gaskets were required. Geoff and his team of willing assistants, Jim & Mick, finally prevailed and the engine is ready to give another 80 years' service.



We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of two mannequins from the UK. The purchase was made possible, in part, by a DVA 'Saluting Their Service' grant. The intention is to dress them up using some of the many vintage uniforms that we have in storage and display them in various spaces in the ship. As the collective memory of events during WW2 fades we are trying to enhance the visitor's educational experience by showing models of the men who served on ships of the RAN, in particular on corvettes such as the *Castlemaine*. This will hopefully give our visitors a better appreciation of the young men who manned the corvettes and the environment they lived in. We hope, over time, to add more mannequins to our collection.

Recently we were sorting out the vintage uniforms down in the hold working out which would be suitable for the mannequins. Also in the hold was found a box of letters dating back to the 1970's pertaining to the formation of the MTA and the acquisition of the *Castlemaine*. It is hoped to add an extra chapter to the *Castlemaine* book with more details

of what went on back in those days in order to arrive at the point we are today. While reading the letters it dawned on me that it is 50 years in October since the ship was gifted to the Trust – party anyone?

Now let's take a trip back in time, 82 years to be exact, to August 1941 and the launching of our ship. Another photo of the launch has been unearthed in the MHT archives. This photo is a lot clearer than the others in our collection and taken from a slightly different spot. The story goes that due to the cold weather the tallow on the slip had become less than slippery and it required the assistance of the tug *Keera* to assist and eventually she glided into the water. The *Keera* is clearly seen in the photo along with two other corvettes fitting out at the pier, possibly *Ballarat* and *Geelong*. (Search and MHT photo courtesy of Geoff Dougall)



All the 'Castlemaine Capers' newsletters are also available on our website:  
[hmascastlemaine.org.au](http://hmascastlemaine.org.au)

If you have any comments or contributions, please send them to me Bob Pearson at  
[newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au](mailto:newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au)

Cheers & TTFN

Bob