

HMAS Castlemaine - 80th Anniversary of Commissioning

Richard Budzienny, Secretary/Treasurer, Maritime Trust of Australia Inc (HMAS Castlemaine - 1942)

HMAS *Castlemaine* is one of the only surviving *Bathurst*-class corvettes of 60 that were built in Australian shipyards, and the only one that is still afloat. The ship is owned and operated by the Maritime Trust of Australia, Inc. (referred to hereafter as the Trust), a volunteer organization, of which the ship is its only asset. She celebrated her 80th anniversary of commissioning in 2022. The actual commissioning date was 17 June 1942 in the middle of winter. Rather than celebrate the event in the Melbourne winter of 2022, the Trust chose to hold the celebration to coincide with Victorian Navy Day on 9 October 2022 in the spring.

The commemorative October day arrived, and the weather gods smiled on the celebration. In conjunction with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) through patron Commodore Greg Yorke (RAN), and with the support of the Hobsons Bay City Council, a programme of events was organised. The old girl was 'dressed' for the occasion, and she shone against the clear blue sky of a lovely spring day.

In Commonwealth Reserve Williamstown, the park that is adjacent to Gem Pier where the ship is berthed, a number of events organised by the Navy took place, which included Naval Cadets, Navy recruiting, a demonstration of Navy drones, and performances by the Navy band. Also entertaining the crowds was a display of aerobatics by a plane from the Royal Australian Air Force and a Navy helicopter provided a glimpse of how a rescue at sea would be performed.

The celebrations were twofold: on the one hand, numerous public events showcased the modern Navy, and secondly, *Castlemaine* was open to the public for part of the day; during the other part of the day, official guests were invited to partake in a guided tour of the ship and enjoy a reception at an adjacent yacht club. The guest list included patrons, dignitaries, and people who have helped the Trust keep the dream alive since first taking over the ship in 1974. The Trust hopes that these same individuals will continue to help into the future. Unfortunately, the only World War II crew member still alive was not able to attend the celebrations; however, everyone who attended was pleased to have several relatives attend the events that were held to mark the occasion.

At 1600, the Trust welcomed on board invited guests for a guided tour before heading to the pier to the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria for the official reception. This

included drinks, food, and naturally a few speeches. Commander Dennis Gale (RAN, retired, and our current president); Peter Hemphill, the mayor of Hobsons Bay City Council; and Commodore Greg Yorke (RAN) all spoke to the gathered guests and esteemed attendees. After the reception, the party returned to Gem Pier to watch the Sunset Ceremony performed by the RAN. This involved the Navy Band on the pier and sailors on the forecastle of the ship. For those who not aware of the full meaning and tradition of the Sunset Ceremony, please see the following link: <https://www.navy.gov.au/history/tradition/tradition-colours-and-sunset>. After a long and successful day of celebration, the ship was able to rest again, confident that she would be remembered long into the future. The day was certainly a fitting tribute to the ship, those who built her, those who served on her, and those who have preserved her for future generations.



Top photo: Dressed up for the day!
Bottom photo: Finale of the Sunset Ceremony.

Credit: Maritime Trust of Australia Inc.