

WAR DIARIES OF BRUCE DYKER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

BRUCE DYKER - LEADING WIRELESS OPERATOR

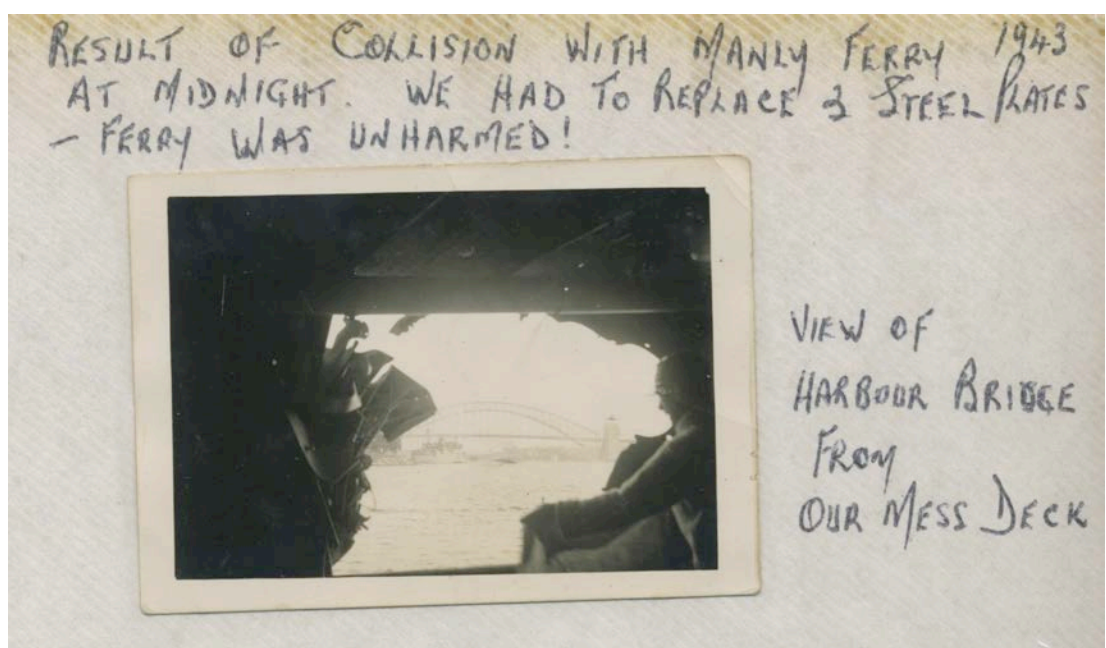
From VCE assignment by Kylie Lind who interviewed Bruce in 1990

Mr Bruce Dyker was born in Melbourne in 1920. In 1934, Bruce was chosen from 34 other candidates who sat an examination in Minyip to be placed in permanent employment as a telegraphist with the Post Office. Bruce worked in Minyip until the age of 18, when he was given the chance to work in a Melbourne Post Office. In 1938, Bruce joined the Army Reserve and became a corporal. However when war broke out Bruce could not enlist because he was employed in an essential service.

In July 1942, Bruce, 22, was sent to war as the Navy required trained morse code operators to serve on Corvettes. At the end of his service on Castlemaine he had been given the title of Leading Wireless Operator, two ranks above his original position.



PHOTOS FROM AN ALBUM COMPILED BY BRUCE IN 1990



FIRST BEARDS
DARWIN 1943



EGGHEADS
(HARD TO TELL IN MY CASE)



"BLONDIE" MESSMAN, "WERT," DON
"AGGIE" WESTON, "HORATIO" NELSON
DAVE, "EDGAR" DYKER



BLUEY BOORKE CHIEF COOK



ABAE? SEAMEN

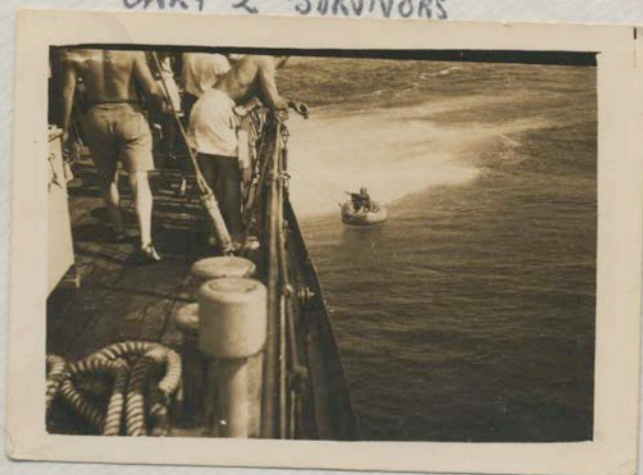


LES GRUNWALD COOK

SWIMMING PARTY GOING ASHORE
AT THURSDAY ISLAND



RESCUING SURVIVORS OF CRASHED AMERICAN PLANE
PORT MORESBY AREA 1942.
ONLY 2 SURVIVORS



TRIPS IN TO JAP OCCUPIED TIMOR
1942-1943
FERRYING SUPPLIES AND AMMUNITION
EVACUATING WOUNDED SOLDIERS, AND
PORTUGUESE CIVILIANS AND CHILDREN



OFF BETANO BEACH
FIRES LIT ASHORE TO
GUIDE US IN

LANDING STORES
PORT MORESBY



BUELLING TANKS
NEAR FINSCHAFEN



AMAS VENDETTO
CONVOYING



NATIVE HUTS
MILNE BAY N.G.



ARTHUR ANSWORTH AND I,
WAITING OFF SHORE OF TIMOR 1942

ARTHUR
WAS
AT
FLINDERS
WITH
ME

WAS ON KURU
WHICH DID
DANGEROUS
WORK
AROUND TIMOR
WITH US



ARTHUR AND I 1980
38 YEARS LATER



HMAS CASTLEMAINE

From www.castlemaine.org

The Bathurst class corvettes were designed in Australia, based on the British Bangor class corvette and modified for local conditions. They were built primarily as mine sweepers, also capable of armed escorts, landing and embarking troops and supplies ashore, and, when the scourge of enemy submarines was realised, anti-submarine warfare. To this end, *HMAS Castlemaine* was an economical ship which could operate in both open and shallow coastal waters and was armed with proven and reliable anti-aircraft guns, depth charge launchers and the QF 4 inch deck gun which fired a range of specialised ammunition. The class was officially designated 'Australian Mine Sweeper'.



Her small crew, initially of 70 was expanded to nearly 100 owing to the equipment added to the corvettes during the war such as radar and ASDIC, an early form of sonar.

It is fitting that she is berthed in perpetuity at Williamstown, where she was built and subsequently launched on the 7th of August 1941 by Mrs. R. G. Menzies, wife of the then Prime Minister and that her engines were built, in the town for which she is named- Castlemaine. Throughout her service career she suffered minor damage to enemy actions, was involved in a collision with a ferry in Manly, Sydney, ran aground near Millingimbi off the coast of Arnhem Land and was involved in the same action in which *HMAS Armidale*, one of her sister ships was sunk off the coast of Timor.

SERVICE HISTORY OF HMAS CASTLEMAINE



1942

Following commissioning at Melbourne HMAS Castlemaine proceeded to Sydney for working-up exercises after which she began operational service escorting convoys between Sydney and Melbourne. On the night of 11 August 1942, collision with a Manly ferry in Sydney Harbour put her in dockyard hands for seven days.

On **26 August 1942**, she departed Sydney to report to the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Darwin, but when enroute was ordered to temporarily escort convoys between Townsville and Port Moresby.

On **29 September 1942**, HMAS Castlemaine departed Port Moresby to proceed to Darwin arriving on 5 October. On arrival HMAS Castlemaine began a short period of service escorting vessels from Darwin to the vicinity of Cape Wessel. On 6 November with a Dutch army officer and four war correspondents embarked she proceeded to Betano (Timor) where, after embarking soldiers and refugees during the night of 7/8 November, returned safely to Darwin at daylight on 8 November.

In **November 1942** it was decided to relieve the Australian 2/2nd Independent Company, then operating as a guerrilla force in Timor. It was proposed to use HMAS Ships HMAS Armidale, (another corvette), HMAS Castlemaine and HMAS Kuru (a former Northern Territory patrol vessel requisitioned as a naval tender) to run into Betano Bay on the night of 30 November/1 December, land 50 Dutch troops and withdraw 190 together with some 150

Portuguese refugees from Japan occupation. On the night of 4/5 December a second run was planned to withdraw the 2/2nd Independent Company.

HMAS Kuru sailed from Darwin at 2230 hours on 28 November for Betano scheduled to arrive about two hours before the two corvettes, land stores and embark refugees for transfer to HMAS Castlemaine on arrival and then to transship and land troops from the HMAS Armidale. After this HMAS Kuru was to pick up the sick and wounded Dutch troops and take them out to the waiting HMAS Armidale before returning to pick up her own passengers for the return trip to Darwin.

The corvettes sailed from Darwin at 0142 hours on 29 November. At 0915 hours they were attacked by a single aircraft, but suffered no damage. En route they were subjected to two further air attacks, each time by five bombers, but again escaped unharmed. They reached Betano safely at 0330 hours on 1 December 1942. Meanwhile HMAS Kuru had reached Betano at 1145 hours (30 November) and embarked 77 refugees and one Australian soldier. Unaware of the delay caused by the air attacks on the corvettes, her commander, Lieut. J A Grant, RANR, sailed for Darwin at about 2000 hours.

Realising that it was far too late to proceed with the operation Lt Cmdr P J Sullivan (Senior Officer) in HMAS Castlemaine, having assured himself that HMAS Kuru was not present, sailed south at best speed. HMAS Kuru was met soon after dawn some 70 miles south of the Timor coast and her passengers transferred to HMAS Castlemaine, it having been decided to send HMAS Armidale and HMAS Kuru back to Betano to complete the operation under cover of darkness. The operation was canceled when Japanese cruisers were reported 60 miles south west of Betano. HMAS Kuru reached Darwin on 3 December but HMAS Armidale was lost by air attack on **1 December**.

The operation was cancelled when Japanese cruisers were reported 60 miles south west of Betano. HMAS Kuru reached Darwin on 3 December but HMAS Armidale was lost by air attack on 1 December. After parting company HMAS Castlemaine set out first to search for survivors from a missing RAAF Beaufighter some 150 miles south east of Betano and thence to Darwin where she arrived on 2 December to resume escort duty on the Darwin-Thursdays Island route. On 15 December and the following day, her convoy bound westward from Cape Wessel to Darwin was attacked by aircraft. SS Period sustained a direct hit killing four and wounding six members of her crew. This and two further attacks on the convoy were repulsed by HMAS Castlemaine's brisk anti-aircraft fire. The convoy reached Darwin without further incident.

1943

On **2 January 1943**, HMAS Castlemaine paid her second visit to New Guinea when she arrived at Port Moresby escorting the troopship Van Heemskerck. She returned to Darwin on 9 January and thereafter until the end of **June 1943** she was engaged escorting merchant shipping between Darwin and Thursdays Island and to Whyndam. Since commissioning the corvette had steamed some 31,000 miles.

On **20 July 1943** she returned to Sydney after an absence of 327 days, an almost unbroken seagoing service. Refit kept the corvette in dockyard hands until the end of August 1943.

Commencing with departure from Sydney on 27 August HMAS Castlemaine was engaged escorting convoys between Sydney and Brisbane until **12 November 1943**. On 28 November

she proceeded to Townsville having been allocated escort duty in the North Eastern Area between North Queensland ports and New Guinea.

1944

In **March 1944** she was transferred to the control of the Naval Officer-in-Charge, New Guinea.

On **2 August 1944** Castlemaine departed Adelaide for Fremantle en route to Darwin and after calling at Onslow arrive in Darwin on 20 August. She had thus, since commissioning, circumnavigated the mainland of Australia. At Darwin she was allocated for service with a survey unit engaged mainly on charting the Scott Reef-Browse island area.

1945

Save for a visit to Fremantle (24 February to 22 March 1945) HMAS Castlemaine continued to operate as a survey vessel based in Darwin until 16 August 1945. She then detached to proceed to Morotai and thence to Subic Bay (Phillipines). On 29 August 1945 HMAS Castlemaine arrived at Hong Kong, where until mid September she was engaged on anti-patrol and escort duty in the cleared channel. Thereafter, until 3 October she engaged in the mine clearance operations in the Hong Kong area with the 21st and 22nd Minesweeping Flotillas, which comprised 19 Australian minesweepers and attached vessels.

With the cessation of hostilities HMAS Castlemaine proceeded via Morotai and Thursday Island HMAS Castlemaine arrived in Melbourne on 16 November 1945. She paid off on 16 December having steamed 117,000 miles and 13,000 hours under way on war service