

# CASTLEMAINE CHRONICLE

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## An Occasional Newsletter

### Issue #13 – Sep 2025

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Welcome loyal readers. To start this edition I have some bad news and good news. First the bad news, the acquisition of the Oerliken gun from the Navy that was to be placed on the starboard bridge wing has stalled. It appears there were too many bureaucratic hurdles to jump so it now sits on the back burner. One positive thing to come out of the whole exercise is that we now know that a gun exists that is possibly obtainable in the future – we just need to know the right people in the right places.

The good news is that we were successful in obtaining a grant from the DSS Volunteer Grants Programme. This grant process is facilitated by the office of our local federal member Tim Watts and the monies are to be used to offset our insurance costs, which are considerable.

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Over the winter period we have had excellent visitor number on most weekends. As we move into spring, and the better weather, we can expect the trend to continue. Soon our Tuesday maintenance crew will be looking forward to our bi-annual wrestle with the awnings which takes place around Melbourne Cup day, but more on that in the next edition - maybe with pictures.

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If you think back over past editions you may remember that the engine room is being given the big make-over by Geoff and his helpers Jim and Mick. When he is finished everything that requires it will have had a layer or two of paint applied, and all pipework will be painted the correct colour. Geoff has provided before and after pictures and description of some of the detail work he is doing.



*On the left the thing you are looking at is a painted over compartment label and on the right cleaned up.*

*Compartment labels are usually found over doorways, on hatches or tank lids and give a description of the compartment (i.e. galley, engine room, fan room etc.) to find 2 of them on the forward bulkhead, where these are, is highly unusual.*

*They were in an awkward position to get at so I was racking my brains to work out what the labelling could be. In the end I couldn't help myself and had to get them down and clean them up with Jim's and Mick's assistance.*

*Well I was really surprised, the label reads Air Escape Reserve Feed Water Tank. Now the mystery for me is why these vents had to be labelled. But I am pleased that even with this small detail we have returned life to a part of the engine room.*

As mentioned all the pipework will eventually be painted the correct colour. This is the colour scheme as provide by Geoff.

Dark Green – Salt Water

Lime Green – Feed (distilled) Water

Royal Blue – Freshwater

Brown – Fuel or Oil

Red – Fire Main

Yellow – Bilge and Ballast

Black – Sludge

Silver – Uninsulated Steam & Insulated Pipework

White – Main Steam

Light Blue – Auxiliary Steam

Light Brown – Exhaust Steam

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Occasionally in previous editions we have brought you memories and stories of men who served on *Castlemaine*. This time it is appropriate to bring you some memories and anecdotes from an early days volunteer, Dick Coyle. Dick's eldest daughter Jackey visited the ship in July with her husband in order to donate her father's uniform to the ship's collection on behalf of the Coyle family. Although Dick Coyle didn't serve on *Castlemaine* he did serve in the RAN during WW2 and became a volunteer in the early days of restoration. Jackey kindly provided the words below to honour her father's contribution to the restoration of the ship.

*On Tuesday 8 July the eldest daughter of longtime volunteer Dick Coyle visited the ship to donate his Navy uniform to the museum, on behalf of the Coyle family.*

*During WWII, Dick was stationed in Darwin as the senior radar officer responsible for a team assigned to sort out the radar issues of all ships coming into port – an astonishing responsibility for someone of only 21. So, more than 50 years later, he was well qualified to lead the team that installed the radar system in the original Radar Room of the Castlemaine.*

*Richard Budzienny remembers many years ago working with Dick (and Ian Shackleton) when the radar equipment was being found, transported to the ship, and installed.*

*When he showed Dick's daughter Jackey around the ship, she was amazed by the restorations since her last visit. 'It really brings home the tough conditions these guys were working under,' she said.*

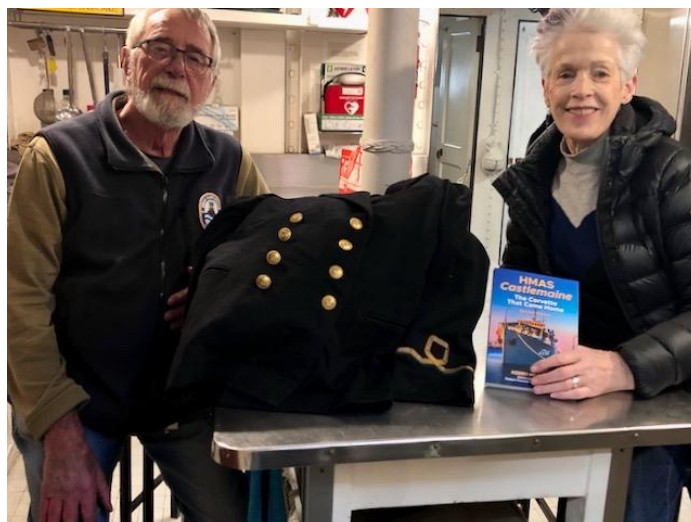
*Dick was studying applied physics when WWII broke out. He joined the Navy and rookie-trained at Rushcutters Bay, Sydney. He was posted as a Sub-Lieutenant and radar officer on the troop-landing ship HMAS Manoora, training Army troops to embark on landing boats in rough seas. The ship later sailed with troops, trucks and tanks to New Guinea to resist Japanese landings. As the Port Radar Officer at Cairns, he helped to shut down the base and look after ships returning following the Japanese retreat from New Guinea. His last naval appointment was as 'Acting Temporary Provisional on Probation Lieutenant Special Branch' in Darwin.*



*Dick Coyle in WW2*



*Dick Coyle the Castlemaine volunteer*



*'Our Dick' with Jackey and her father's uniform*



*All of Dick's children took an interest in his Castlemaine work.*

*Stephen used to go along on his day off: "He would ask me to paint some electrical housing items for the X-ray unit systems, to prevent rust in the cast-iron fittings." He also remembers, "Back in the '70s I was watching TV and Dad was reading beside me. Suddenly he jumped out of his chair and exclaimed that he had installed a radar on the ship named the Krait." According to the Australian War Memorial, the MV Krait – originally known as the Kofuku Maru – was formerly the property of a Japanese fishing firm in Singapore. After the fall of Singapore, she was employed in the rescue of evacuees from ships that had been sunk along the East Coast of Sumatra, transporting some 1,100 people during this period.*

*Jackey, Alice, Rebecca and Jinny have visited the ship throughout its Williamstown life, with Jinny even making a video for her university studies.*

*Gabrielle remembers Dick's wartime anecdotes. "The career officers and ratings called the wartime officers the 'wavy navy' as the braid on the cuffs was wavy".*

*"Dad hated beetroot as he had it every meal for several weeks," she continues. "They used to send the supplies by train but they sent a whole train of beetroot. He always said, why couldn't they send at least one wagon of something else?" (We're puzzled regarding the train reference as they only constructed the railway all the way to Darwin in 2004, but that's the way Dad told the story. We assume they offloaded in Alice onto lorries.*

*And finally: "In Darwin, they had to sort out all the radar issues before the ships sailed so it was not unusual for Dad to be working 24 to 48 hours on the trot. He would be so tired he would fall asleep standing up."*

*Jackey also provided us with two photos of ship volunteers from her father's collection.*





*My attempt at putting names to faces, let me know any I miss please.*

Standing L to R: ?, John Szanto, Alf 'Bluey' Thornton, ?, ?, ?, Kevin Bebend, Ian Shackleton, Jack Pearce, Dick Budzienny, Bob Gerring, ?.

Kneeling L to R: Peter Williams, ?, Geoff Middleton.

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As you may or may not know the *Castlemaine* had a derrick set up on both the port and starboard sides of the ship for loading or unloading 'stuff'. As a project to further enhance the ships authenticity it was decided to rig up the derrick on the starboard side to show visitors another aspect of the ship's operations. We have a derrick on board with what we think are the correct fittings on each end. To ascertain if they were correct we needed a drawing, easy you say considering we have hundreds of corvette detail drawings in filing cabinets and cupboards. The initial consensus was however, no drawing we'll have to wing it. However your humble correspondent just happened to be looking through one of the cupboards in the chief's mess and saw some cardboard boxes (unlabelled) so I took one out at random, opened it and saw it was full of drawings and the one on top was the details of the derrick arrangement for corvettes. Spooky eh!

It turns out the fittings are correct so the derrick needs to be tarted up from its rather forlorn condition and who better to do that than Deano. So, fresh from his triumphant tarting up of the whaler's mast (see previous edition) he set to scraping, sanding and many coats of lacquering to bring the derrick back to mint condition. Hopefully by the next edition we will have some photos of the derrick set up in working condition.





*Above: Dean working on the derrick. Below: after a few coats of lacquer*



*The derrick is made from Hoop Pine and still needs another three coats of lacquer.*

Over the past few weeks there have been a few weather events that haven't done our mooring lines any favours. We have ended up with stretched lines that required taking in on more than one occasion. Another consequence of the stretched lines was that the ship ended up too far forward of our gangway position therefore had to be re-positioned by pulling in the stern ropes. The 'Handy Billy' really lived up to its name for this job.



*Pulling in the lines using the 'Handy Billy'*

Another problem caused by the weather was that the nylon/rubber rubbing strip on the aft dolphin fell off. This meant that the ship was rubbing up against the timber dolphin and the steel cap, not good. Buffer John came up with a temporary solution until Parks Victoria, our landlord, replaces the strip.





Also on the subject of our lines some idiot thought it was funny to cut through one of our headlines one night. Words fail me as to why someone would do that.

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If you have any stories to tell that you would like published in a quality journal then write them up and send them along and we will include them in the next newsletter. The only thing I ask is that they be about *Castlemaine*, corvettes or other naval stuff, ships or people, they don't even have to be true, just almost true, because memory plays tricks.

I look forward to being inundated, send them to me Bob Pearson at [newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au](mailto:newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au)

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TTFN

Bob