



# CASTLEMAINE CHRONICLE

Previously published as CASTLEMAINE CAPERS

An Occasional Newsletter

Issue #16 – June 2026

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Another few months has flown by and here we are with our second newsletter for 2026.

The AGM for the Maritime Trust of Australia (ex-HMAS Castlemaine Museum Ship) was held in March. We have an election for the committee every two years and this year was it. There was a spill of the committee and a new committee was elected as follows:-

Dennis Gale	President
Andy McNeill	Vice President
Dick Budzienny	Treasurer & Secretary
Andrew Campbell	Committee Member (Asst Secretary)
Martin Woodhead	Committee Member (Asst Treasurer)
Mike Harrington	Committee Member
Bob Pearson	Committee Member
John Morris	Committee Member
Rob Tainton	Committee Member

Dennis also presented the Presidents report for 2025/26, edited highlights are presented below.

Another year has passed and the ship is still looking very good. The overall ship visitor numbers continue to be slightly lower than previous years but the Trust continues to remain in a comfortable financial position. Visitor numbers on weekends is very weather dependant, unfortunately and we have had more than our share of wet weekends this last year which has had some impact on total annual numbers.

The accumulation of financial assets is vital to enable us to keep the ship preserved for the longer term. These funds will be extremely important when one of the options to ensure the longer-term preservation of Castlemaine will be a docking or relocation of the ship to a permanent dry dock. Any further docking costs will on present estimate be in excess of \$3m, hence it imperative we continue to endeavour to develop a sink fund to be prepared for this eventuality.

The ship preservation has continued in various areas of the upper deck, flag deck and ongoing painting of both upper decks and ship side particularly at the waterline. A number of corroded deck areas have had doubler plates welded over them, although not ideal, is cost effective method of preservation.

Geoff Clark continued with bilge painting and preservation effort in the Engine Room and shining of the brass work by his able assistants.

A further two mannequins have been acquired, one for the CO's cabin and one for the radio room which gives a total of four that further add to the authenticity of the ship restoration.

The installation of the ships derrick on the Stbd side by Dean, Mike and John is another fixture which has added to the ship's original configuration.

I should mention the trio of electricians Mick, Jim, and Noel who continue undertake modifications, repairs, etc with numerous discussions in the process.

Bob Pearson continues to do an excellent job of managing the volunteers ship opening roster, successfully getting a number of financial grants, and also the production of the Castlemaine Capers newsletter. The newsletters provide information on many of the current activities that occur on the ship during the year and significantly also provides a permanent record on the Castlemaine web site.

The ship volunteers are the key to our survival and fortunately we have been able to maintain a core of people to meet our obligation as guides etc when the ship is open to the public on weekends etc, and also the ongoing ship preservation and maintenance program on Tuesdays each week.

These volunteers continue to do ongoing painting, cleaning, restoration and electrical work that all contribute to the ship operation and presentation. A particular to mention Dick Budzienny who has continued his exceptional effort as Secretary/Treasurer and additional support in this area in 2026 would be appreciated.

The ship still presents very well due to the ongoing work of all our volunteers and there are regular visitor comments as to how good the ship looks.

The Trust is in a sound financial position with visitor numbers slightly lower this past year but continuing to remain fairly consistent. We were still able to cover a significant portion of the annual insurance costs by opening the ship daily for the two weeks over the Xmas/New Year period.

I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing efforts to keep the ship in the exceptional operation and presentation state that it is in. We continue to receive highly favourable comments and it is surprising how many are return visitors.

Well done all.

Dennis Gale Commander RAN Rtd.  
President Maritime Trust of Australia.  
31st March 2026

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After many years of sometimes using 'HMAS' in front of *Castlemaine* on many things, both official and unofficial, Dick decided to confirm whether or not this was legal. A reply was received back in February from Lt Cmdr Laura Vines the manager of Navy Brand & Marketing at the RAN Directorate of Navy Reputation Management indicating that we can continue using 'HMAS' as long as it is clear that the ship is no longer in active service. So, all committee members can now rest easy, there will be no prosecutions and time spent in the brig!

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Work continues on Tuesday's during these winter months even though the weather is not always conducive to outside activity. The rehabilitation of the engine room is continuing and the bridge is also continuing to receive some TLC at the moment. The electrical department has been busy recently undertaking the bi-annual Testing & Tagging of all portable electrical equipment.

Having read nearly to the bottom of page 2 you are probably wondering why there are no pictures so far, as I know you all love pictures. Well, the truth is that I am just waffling on and filling up space so that I can get onto the next page and bring you some stunning images.

Whenever the sea is flat enough our younger volunteers can't wait to get in the punt and muck about. Chipping and painting the boot topping in way of the wind and water line. Below see Martin and Andy at work.



The bridge has also been the subject of some major restoration work. The binnacle has come in for particular attention from Deano.



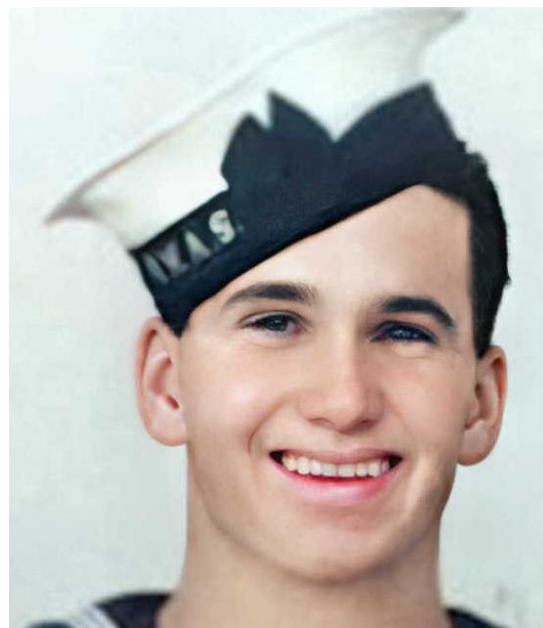


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I'd now like to give a mention to Kerry Hodges a long time volunteer and supporter of *Castlemaine*. Kerry was a volunteer way back in the 1970's when the project first started and has kept in touch ever since. He is the author of our book and has produced the histories of the 60 corvettes that are now on our website. Recently Kerry has been researching original crew members, looking for dates of death (DoD) to complete our Honour Roll and any photos (as old photos are gold). He came up with a list of DoD, which have been added to the roll on the website and in the book, and some photos of crew members. Below are two new photos.



Lt Carl Baldwin Scutt



Sto Vaughan Osborne Mills

During active service the *Castlemaine* had an unofficial/official photographer in Stoker Ken Fenton. Ken took a lot of photos and developed most of them onboard. A few years ago we were lucky enough to have his album presented to us by his daughter. It is now in the mess deck museum in a display case along with some blow ups of some of the photos. One of those photos is of the ship's cat *Mr XXXX* sitting on the 4" gun barrel. *Mr XXXX* has attracted much interest in the time he has been on display to the point where Dick has thought of creating a T-shirt! We asked Rob, who is our AI expert, if he could colourise the picture and the result is below.



As well as being a legendary cat there is an actual legend about him that saw the light of day in a recent post on the Australian National Maritime Museum Facebook page. I have taken the liberty of filching it and I present it below.



Australian National Maritime Museum

3d · 🌐

Every ship needs a good lookout, but this sailor didn't walk on two legs.

Ship's cats have sailed with humans for thousands of years, serving as both pest controllers and as sources of morale and luck. You may know Matthew Flinders' cat, Trim; Unsinkable Sam, who survived three WWII sinkings; or Mrs Chippy from Shackleton's Antarctic expedition. But have you heard of Mr XXXX?

Pronounced Four-X, like the beer, Mr XXXX was the ship's cat on HMAS Castlemaine, a WWII Bathurst-class corvette. The ship mainly operated in the New Guinea area, the Indian Ocean, and the China Sea, transporting troops and supplies, conducting minesweeping, and carrying out surveys.

The story goes that, because the ship sailed in tropical waters, flying fish were abundant. Mr XXXX seemed to sense their presence long before the crew did. He would sit in a doorway, whiskers quivering in anticipation, and, when a fish landed on deck, pounce with lightning speed before carrying his prize to a secret spot. No one ever figured out where.

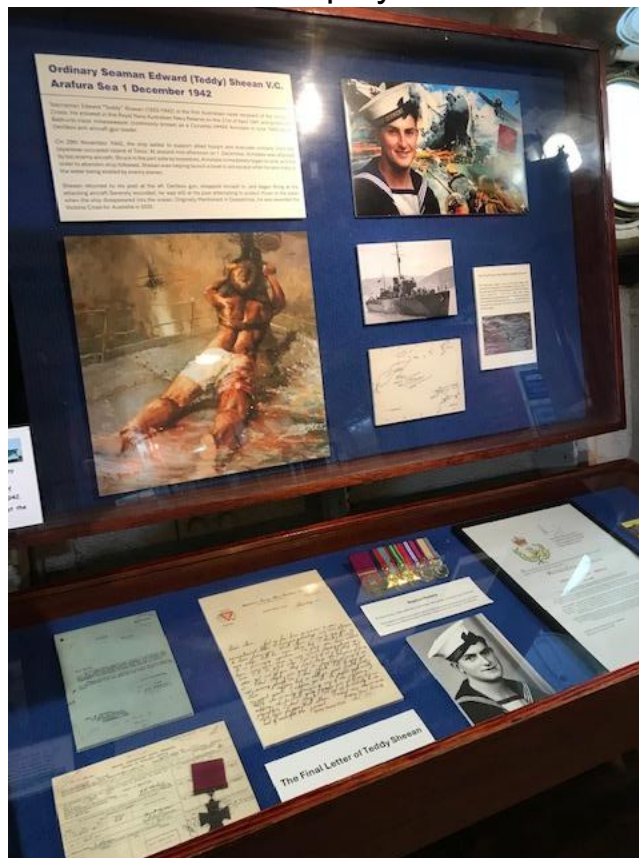
Today, HMAS Castlemaine is listed on the ARHV under HV000421, and remains afloat in Williamstown, VIC. Through the Maritime Trust of Australia, HMAS Castlemaine received funding in the 2025–26 round of MMAPSS grants to repair the deck plating. Now, as the last intact corvette of its class, a volunteer team continues to preserve the vessel in honour of all the people (and their furry companions) who served on the original sixty corvettes. Visitors can step aboard and walk in the shoes, or perhaps

follow in the pawprints, of the original crew. I'm sure Mr XXXX, with whiskers waving and tail aloft, would approve. 🐾 <https://arhv.sea.museum/collections>

Image courtesy of Maritime Trust of Australia. Photographed by Ken Fenton, WWII crew member of HMAS Castlemaine.

I can't comment either way on the truth of the story, but it's a good one!

The display cases in the Mess Deck museum space are original to when the museum was first created back in the 1970's, also a lot of the displays also date from that era. Over the last few years myself and others have added new displays and revamped others but they are mostly looking a bit tired. In recent times Rob has taken on the task of gradually rehabilitating some of the displays. Just completed is an update of our tribute to OS Edward (Teddy) Sheean VC. Pictured below is Rob at work on the Victorian Navy display and the finished Sheean display.



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As part of the long term project to revamp and refresh the museum we aim to re-create the ship's First-Aid area, stb side aft corner of the Mess Deck. Last year, as a start to the project, we applied for a grant from the federal government's 'Saluting Their Service' grant scheme to have made a facsimile of the First-Aid cabinet that would have been in place. We have an original drawing from 1940, a blueprint no less, to make sure we get it right. We heard last week that we had been successful in obtaining the grant. Also included was grant money to create two new Carley Float forms to be finished off by our volunteers and placed in the correct place on the ship.

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I have a feeling that I have forgotten to put some happening in this newsletter. If anybody can think of what I have missed please let me know. Then I can issue a supplement, never done that before.

If you need to contact me with any complaints, suggestions or articles for inclusion please use this email [newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au](mailto:newsletter@hmascastlemaine.org.au)

Remember that all editions of this newsletter are available on the website at [www.hmascastlemaine.org.au](http://www.hmascastlemaine.org.au)

TTFN  
Bob