



# CASTLEMAINE CAPERS

An Occasional Newsletter

Issue # 7 – Mar 2024

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Welcome to issue #7 of our occasional newsletter *Castlemaine Capers*.

Prior to the first edition of this newsletter I was casting around for a catchy title, because as every writer knows getting the title right is the hardest part, but we settled for *Castlemaine Capers* anyway. Now however I am looking to change the title in order to rekindle, respect and remember the lives that the crew members lived during WW2. It appears that the crew published a ships newspaper entitled *Castlemaine Chronicle*. According to Bruce Dyker's diary the first edition was produced in August 1944 at sea on the way to Darwin. The co-editors, who produced the two pages on two typewriters, were Geoff Moses, Nick Carter and Don Uden and they had high hopes of acquiring a duplicating machine in Darwin. From there the trail goes cold as I have no idea if they did get a machine and produced more editions. It would be terrific if a copy could be located somewhere.

I would like to pose the question to my loyal readers - shall we change the name? Your feedback welcomed.

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On New Year's Eve last a small group of our volunteers, who are dedicated fireworks lovers, congregated on the quarter deck to get one of the best views of Melbourne's fireworks.

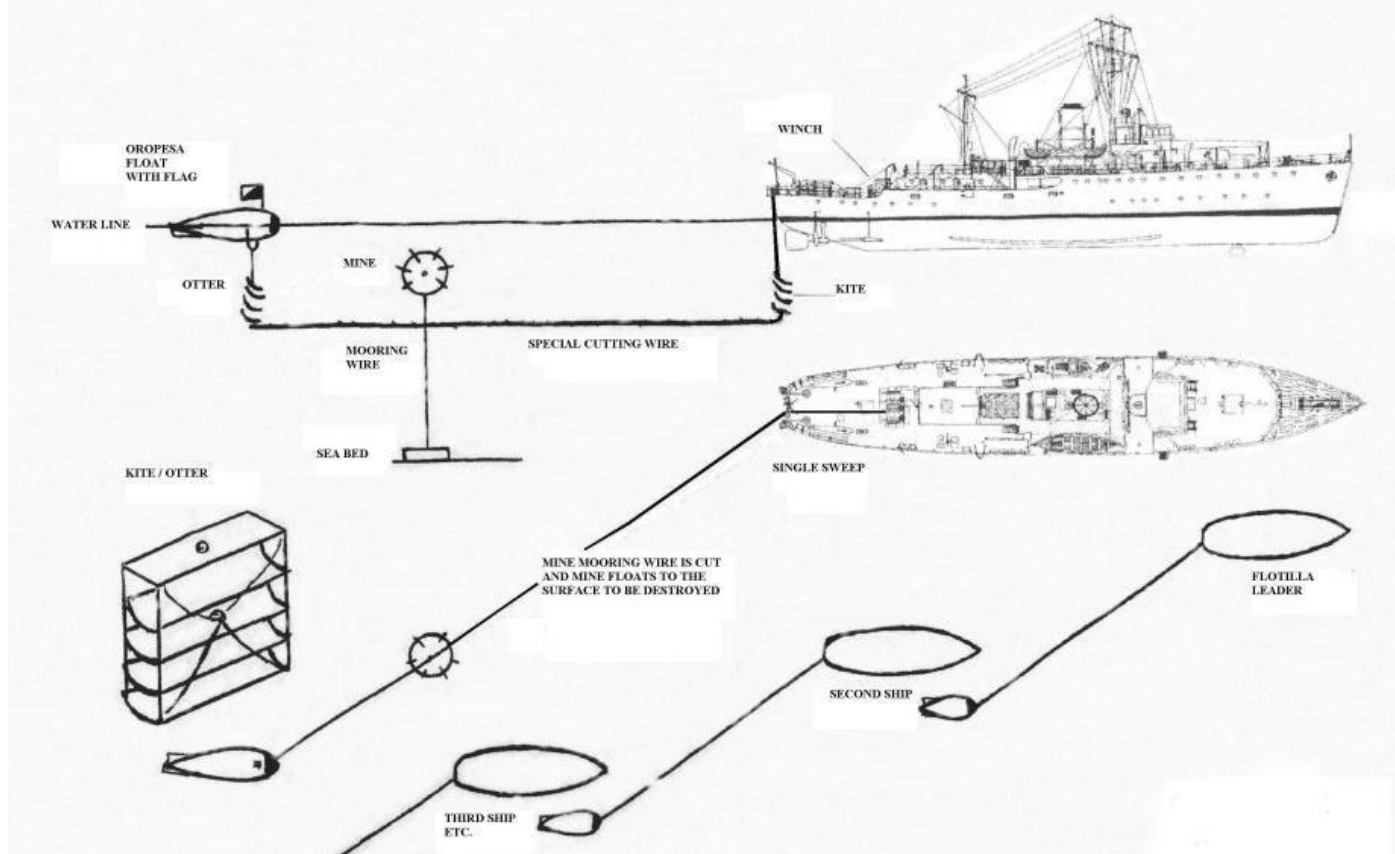


On New Year's Day we were droned and two of the photos taken are below, courtesy of Jason Mangion.



One of the tasks undertaken by *Castlemaine* during her operational service was minesweeping. The aim of the sweeping operation was to cut the anchor line, or tether, of the mine so that it popped to the surface to be disposed of. There were many cutters attached to the Oropesa sweep wire or special cutting wire (see diagram) in order to achieve this. Because there are many types of cutters, all working on a similar principle, we are not sure which type was used on *Castlemaine*. Unfortunately the museum does not possess a cutter or sample of the wire so if anybody has one lying around in their shed we will take it off your hands as it will make a great addition to our displays.

To put the cutting operation into context here is a diagram of the minesweeping operation.



Volunteer Andrew Campbell suggested we include this small article and has provided some text and two diagrams describing the cutting process.

The Mk 12 Mod 2 illustrated in the diagram below is one of many cutters but the operation is similar for many.

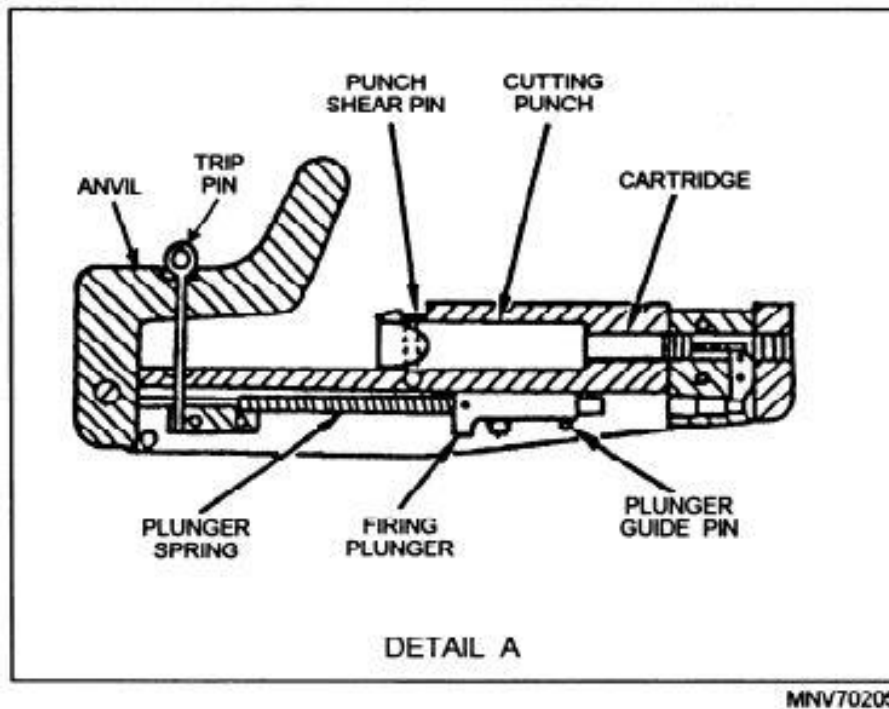
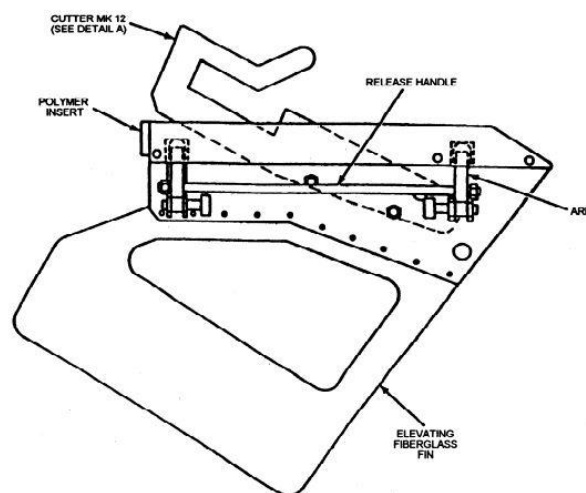


Figure 8-6.—Modified Mk 12 Mod 2 cutter assembly.

How it works is, the cutter is one of many attached to the Oropesa sweep wire. When the sweep wire comes into contact with the mine anchor line the mine anchor line feeds into the 'L' shaped gap. The mine anchor line presses against the trip pin and trips the plunger which is connected to a firing pin. The firing pin fires a percussion primed cartridge which drives a captive chisel point into the mine anchor line and severs it. The mine then floats to the surface, to be disposed of.

Below is a diagram showing the mechanism for attaching the cutter to the sweep wire also showing the stabilising fin.



Any questions on this procedure can be addressed to Andrew who says it would be easier to explain if we had a sample.

In issue #5 (Oct 2023) I mentioned our acquisition of a digital copy of the diaries of Bruce Dyker a Telegraphist on *Castlemaine* for over two years. Well the diaries are now available to read on our website at [www.hmascastlemaine.org.au](http://www.hmascastlemaine.org.au) just go to the home page and follow the link. A new section has been created that contains the diaries of three men who served on *Castlemaine*; William (Bill) Palamountain, William (Bill) Hazeldene and Bruce Dyker. I encourage you to have a read as they give us an insight into the everyday lives of crew who served on “ships that would roll on wet grass”.

When reading Bruce’s diaries the transcriptions are interspersed between his written pages. The transcriptions are the work of his niece Verity Byth and his three daughters Christine, Roslyn and Geraldine, truly a labour of love and for that we are tremendously grateful.

Bruce Dyker & Bill Palamountain



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Geoff our bilge rat has provided us with some information about his adventures in the engine room bilge.

*With the best will in the world people working in the engine room sometimes can't avoid dropping things into the bilges never to be seen again until the bilge gets the Geoff treatment. So now with 50% of the bilges done here is a list of the trash and treasure found.*

*1 red Dick Budzienny screwdriver in pristine condition.*

*Note: Three electricians took notice of its welfare after it was recovered.*

*1 square shafted wide tipped heavy-duty screwdriver*

*Note: Too brutal for delicate electrician's hands, must be engineers*

*\$4.50 in coins handed to the donation box.*

*A detailed 3 corner paint scraper.*

*Desalination coil cover plate missing bolts*

*Note: Refitted.*

*Missing bilge and fire pump description plate.*

*Note: Reattached*

*Southern Cross generator cover plate.*

*Note: Not attached yet.*

*Approximately 80 litres of rust, mud, oil paint flakes, red lead, light globes, rusty nuts and bolts.*

*So it's going to be interesting for what shows up next.*

*Below is a photo showing a sample of two plates, one in pristine condition may not have been touched in 80 years, the next one been blasted with salt-water heavily pock marked, both now cleaned and painted.*



The engine room is about to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the addition of a TV screen. Showing on the screen will be an animation of how our triple expansion steam engines work.



One small step at a time, bracket installed.

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On Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> Feb the ship had a visit from Mick Dexter a 99 year old veteran. Mick was a Lt. on HMAS *Deloraine* during WW2. Geoff Clark was on duty to welcome Mick and his granddaughter Lara Wilson and has penned a few words about Mick's visit.

*I spotted him coming along the pier with his granddaughter and his walker, as soon as he got to the gangway he straight away discarded the walker. I welcomed him aboard, introduced myself, and said to him it was a great pleasure to have him on board. We talked a little about his ship, where it was built etc., and he said he served approximately 15 months on her. He then went into the museum area and watched the Castlemaine film and commented that he would not recognise any one but knew what they would be doing. He then eyed the steps heading towards the bridge and his granddaughter said to him the stairs will be too hard, but he was determined to see the bridge. I left them at this time.*

*After a while I caught up with them as they came from the officers' quarters and we had another chat. He told me he was the underwater officer and that he was determined to see*

*his working areas, the bridge asdic and his quarters, he told me his bunk mate was a great fellow. I asked him about the machinery spaces, he told me he didn't like the engine room because it was a scary place but he visited the boiler room to dry his clothes. We spoke about his great efforts on the ladders and he told me about visiting ladies aboard and how they were the first to descend the ladder and the last to come up because the seamen were not so gentlemanly when ladies were around.*



*He also told me the captain was not well taken to when first aboard, and that the crew did something nasty to his (voice) pipes and afterwards the captain settled down and all got along together.*



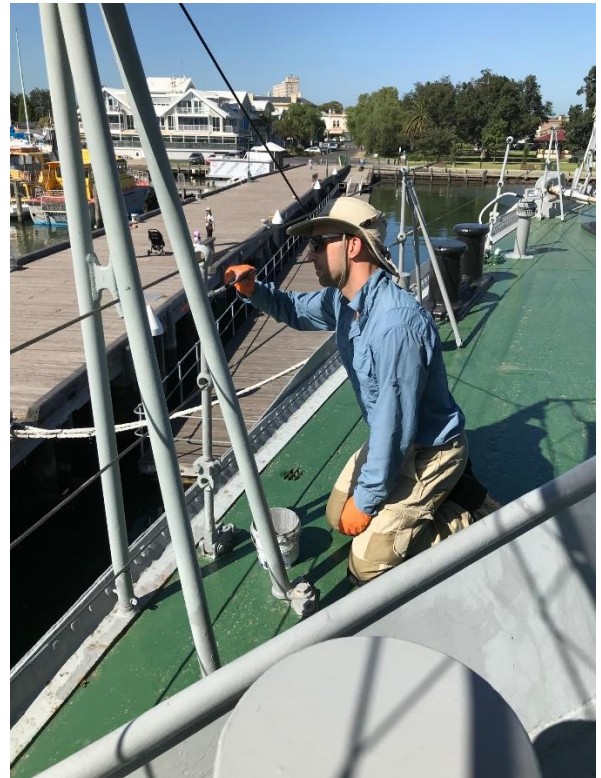
Mick Dexter second from right. Photo taken on HMAS *Deloraine*

*Then it was time to go, as we got to the bottom of the gangway he said his granddaughter had taken a lot out of him today but you could tell he was very happy.*

Now then, just to show you that the everyday maintenance continues, the Bofers gun got some TLC last week. Crew members providing the care are Dennis, Mike and Martin.



Also receiving some attention were some stanchions on the foredeck. A less glamorous part of the ship than a Bofers but nevertheless still entitled to a stroke with the paint brush. Andy and Phil providing that tender touch.



As most of you are no doubt aware a few years ago we got ourselves on the Victorian Heritage Register, blue plaque and all.



This year we intend to apply for registration on the National Heritage List when the next round of nominations opens, supposed to be soon!

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Now, a shout out to one of our volunteers Noel Tehan who is coming along nicely at the moment having recently been discharged from Sunshine Hospital. Hope to have you back soon Noel, you can never have too many electricians. Also good to have Kathleen Driver back on deck after a stay in hospital.



**STOP PRESS!** (For those old enough to know what that means)

Just got word that we have been successful in getting a grant from the 'Geoffrey Evans Trust'. It will cover the cost of the 'Dummies' and the new mooring lines.

All the 'Castlemaine Capers' newsletters are available on our website:

[www.hmascastlemaine.org.au](http://www.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)

TTFN Bob