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# HMAS CASTLEMAINE



HMAS Castlemaine Gem Pier  
2020



HMAS Castlemaine Interior  
20202



HMAS Castlemaine Deck  
2020



HMAS Castlemaine First  
Lieut Cabin 2020



HMAS Castlemaine Life Boat  
2020

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## Location

GEM PIER, WILLIAMSTOWN VIC 3016

## Municipality

HOBSONS BAY CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2407

## VHR Registration

December 10, 2020

## Heritage Listing

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 15, 2020

## What is significant?

The Bathurst Class Minesweeper known as HMAS Castlemaine.

## How is it significant?

HMAS Castlemaine is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

### Criterion B

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

### Criterion G

Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

## Why is it significant?

HMAS Castlemaine has a clear association with the naval defence of Victoria and Australia during World War II. The ship was one of sixty Bathurst-class Minesweepers built in Australia between 1940 and 1943, of which eight were constructed in Victoria at the HMA Naval Dockyard in Williamstown. It demonstrates the development of the Victorian ship building industry during World War II, and the service of those Victorians who served on her in Pacific theatres of war as part of the Royal Australian Navy. [Criterion A]

HMAS Castlemaine is the only known intact World War II naval ship in Victoria. It is only one of two extant Bathurst-class Minesweepers in Australia, the other being displayed on land in South Australia, and the only one in the world remaining in a nautical setting. It is one of only a handful of World War II warships which survive in Australia. [Criterion B]

HMAS Castlemaine is a notable example of a World War II naval ship. Despite being stripped of much of her wartime equipment, the superstructure and internal configuration of this Bathurst-class Minesweeper remains intact. Her subsequent restoration was undertaken largely using parts from other Bathurst-class Minesweepers or

new elements constructed using original materials and specifications. As a result, the ship closely resembles her 1945 configuration, and displays the principal characteristics of a Bathurst-class Minesweeper in a way that allows the class to be easily understood and appreciated. The HMAS Castlemaine retains her nautical setting and operational capacity. [Criterion D]

HMAS Castlemaine is socially significant for her connection to the servicemen who fought on her and other Bathurst-class Minesweepers during World War II. Between 1940 and 1945 some 10,000 Allied servicemen served on Bathurst class Minesweepers, including many Victorians. As the only remaining intact World War II naval ship in the State, it is one of the few places that offers Victorians a first-hand insight into veterans' war experiences. The ship contributes to Victoria's identity and plays an important role in the education of future generations. [Criterion G]

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

## General Conditions

- All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered object.
- Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the object are revealed which relate to the significance of the object, then the exemption covering such works must cease and Heritage Victoria must be notified as soon as possible.

## Specific Permit Exemptions

The following categories of works or activities (permit exemptions) do not require a permit from Heritage Victoria. They are considered not to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the object and have been developed in consultation with the owner.

### **General**

- Undertake hull and superstructure corrosion protection works on an ongoing basis.
- Undertake hull and external corroded steel deck area replacement and repairs within current hull lines, using like for like materials and original ship build plans.
- Continue to source and install original ship fittings and memorabilia consistent with the Trust's mission to return the ship to its 1945 configuration.
- Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
- Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing external services such as plumbing, electrical cabling, surveillance systems, pipes or fire services which does not involve changes in location or scale.
- Maintain and operate original ship fitted machinery – including boilers and engines.
- Maintain, modify and move portable museum memorabilia within the ship.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users, the public or the vessel itself. The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.
- Works necessary to secure any armaments provided works do not alter the form or function of original fabric or fittings of the vessel.
- Painting of previously painted external and internal surfaces in the same colour, finish and product type provided that preparation or painting does not remove all evidence of earlier paint finishes or schemes.
- Cleaning including the removal of surface deposits by the use of low-pressure water (to maximum of 300 psi at the surface being cleaned) and neutral detergents.

### **Interiors**

- Works to maintain or upgrade existing bathrooms and galley, including installing new appliances – providing no pre-1946 fabric is removed.
- Installation, removal or replacement of existing electrical wiring. If wiring is currently exposed, it should remain exposed. If it is fully concealed it should remain fully concealed.
- Removal or replacement of post 1945 light switches or power outlets.
- Removal or replacement of existing hooks, brackets and the like for hanging displays.
- Maintenance, repair and replacement of post 1945 light fixtures, tracks, carpets and/or flexible floor coverings, window furnishings and the like in existing locations.
- Removal or replacement of smoke and fire detectors, alarms and the like, of the same size and in existing locations.
- Repair, removal or replacement of existing ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the central plant is concealed, and that the work is done in a manner which does not alter the vessel's fabric.

### **Public activities**

- The installation and/or erection of temporary elements associated with short term events for a maximum period of seven days and no more than 12 times a year. This includes:
  - o Temporary (lightweight) structures such as shelters, marquees and tents which are weighted down with sandbags or water or attached to the ship.
  - o Temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or to secure public safety.
  - o Temporary infrastructure, including wayfinding/directional signage, lighting, public address systems, furniture and the like in support of events and performances which do not require fixing.

## **Theme**

### **7. Governing Victorians**

Construction dates	1941,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Hermes Number	206261
Property Number	

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## History

The history has been drawn from information provided by the Maritime Trust of Australia and available from the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian War Memorial. It has been supplemented by additional research where necessary.

## Development of the Bathurst Class of Minesweepers

In February 1938, the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board (ACNB) identified the need for a class of general purpose 'local defence vessels' that were easy to construct and operate and capable of undertaking both anti-submarine and minesweeping duties. In July 1938, the RAN Director of Engineering, Rear Admiral P.E. McNeil, was instructed to develop plans for a local defence vessel, with a displacement of approximately 500 tons, a speed of at least 10 knots (19 km/h), and a range of 2,000 nautical miles (3,700 km). McNeil completed his design in February 1939 and while it was never produced, it attracted interest in Australian naval circles, as it offered advantages over existing minesweeping and anti-submarine vessels and could largely be built in Australia's typically smaller shipyards and using local resources.

In September 1939, following the outbreak of World War II, a procurement process for the construction of seven ships, broadly based on McNeil's concept, was commenced. Additional orders were soon placed by the ACNB and the British Admiralty and between 1940-44, 60 ships were built. The 60 new vessels were classified as 'Corvettes' – a word for small warship derived from the French. Fifty six of the 60 vessels were retained by the Royal Australian Navy and, in accordance with Navy tradition, they were named after Australian towns – for example: *HMAS Castlemaine*, *HMAS Colac*, *HMAS Whyalla*, *HMAS Cowra* and so on. It appears as though each town took an interest and assisted in fundraising efforts for their namesake vessel. The lead ship of the new class of Corvettes was named *HMAS Bathurst* and so the class became known as 'Bathurst'-class Australian Minesweepers.

## Construction of *HMAS Castlemaine*

*HMAS Castlemaine* was laid down (construction commenced) on 17 February 1941 at the HMA Naval Dockyard in Williamstown as one of eight Bathurst-class vessels to be constructed there. As McNeil had originally intended, the parts were largely sourced locally with the engines being constructed by Thompsons of Castlemaine (VHR H1732) and the boilers being built at Cockatoo Island in Sydney. Following its completion, *HMAS Castlemaine* was launched by Mrs R.G Menzies, the wife of Prime Minister Robert Menzies, on 7 August 1941. Sea trials followed and it was commissioned (entered active service) on 17 June 1942.

## Active Service 1942-45

Between June 1942 and 1945 *HMAS Castlemaine* undertook a wide range of military duties, including: escorting

vessels, minesweeping, transporting supplies and survey duties – predominantly in Northern Australia, Timor, Hong Kong and Papua New Guinea. A detailed list of her war service is at Appendix B.

## **Post War**

After the end of World War II, *HMAS Castlemaine* became part of the Reserve Fleet (mothball fleet) kept at Geelong. It was regularly towed to Williamstown Dockyard for dry-docking and maintenance, and returned to Geelong. In 1955 *HMAS Castlemaine* was allocated to Flinders Naval Depot (*HMAS Cerberus*) for use as a stationary training ship for engine-room artificers and shipwrights. This role required her to undergo a complete engine overhaul, which was undertaken at Williamstown dockyard.

The overhaul also involved the removal of all non-essential equipment, such as guns, radar, radio, boats, minesweeping gear and deck fittings. The ship was then transported to *HMAS Cerberus* where the boilers were flushed, the ship's decks were stripped bare and most of the rigging removed. The former messdeck was turned into a workshop and the former minesweeping store into a classroom. The small arms magazine was turned into a damage control compartment, which was regularly flooded for training purposes with parties being required to enter the compartment and plug the holes.

Until the mid-1960s the *HMAS Castlemaine* continued to be used for training purposes. However, with the building of a new engineering school at *HMAS Cerberus*, her role as a training ship was reduced, especially as new training methods and technology was introduced to the syllabus. Parts of the engines and boilers were removed to the classrooms as models and in 1969, *HMAS Castlemaine* was declared available for disposal.

## **The Maritime Trust of Australia and Restoration**

The Cerberus Trust was established in 1970 by dedicated volunteers for the express purpose of preserving *HMVS Cerberus*, a pre-federation ship of the Victorian navy (VHR H0186). The group was also interested in acquiring and preserving a Bathurst-class Minesweeper and lobbied to prevent the scrapping of *HMAS Castlemaine*. In October 1973 the Commonwealth Government gifted the Trust the *HMAS Castlemaine* with the proviso that it be “restored to her World War II configuration”. The year following their acquisition of *HMAS Castlemaine*, the Cerberus Trust changed its name to the ‘Maritime Trust of Australia’. While the *HMAS Castlemaine* had been saved, it was in very poor condition, being described by the Trust as “little more than “a rusty and gutted hulk, [on the exterior] stripped of all her deck fittings, winches and armaments. Inside was not much better; there were neither light fittings nor bridge equipment. Below decks, the engines and boilers were in pieces”.

Since 1974, volunteers from the Maritime Trust of Australia have returned much of *HMAS Castlemaine* to her 1945 configuration. Externally, the Bridge has been restored and the decks have been re-fitted with armaments, minesweeping gear, rigging. Internally, the boilers, engines, officer's quarters, radio room and the chart room have all been restored to their original state and the ship is now in operable condition. The two larger spaces have not been restored, with the former messdeck being used as a museum/collection space and the former minesweeping store being used as a meeting room. *HMAS Castlemaine* was relocated from her original berth at South Wharf to Gem Pier in Williamstown in September 1976 and has largely remained there since. It continues to operate as a Museum Ship today.

## **Selected bibliography**

Frank B. Walker, 1992, *HMAS Armidale: The Ship that had to die*, Budgewoi, NSW, Kingfisher Press.

Able Seaman Libby Pearce, 2019, *The ABC of Royal Australian Navy Corvettes*, Canberra, Department of Defence.

Royal Australian Navy, 'HMAS Castlemaine Ship History', <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-castlemaine> [Accessed August 2020].

Peter Parer, 'HMAS Castlemaine' film, 1942, Australian War Memorial  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C189150> [Accessed August 2020].

Maritime Trust of Australia, Images and Chronology Provided.

## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects Criterion G Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. Why is it significant? HMAS Castlemaine has a clear association with the naval defence of Victoria and Australia during World War II. The ship was one of sixty Bathurst-class Minesweepers built in Australia between 1940 and 1943, of which eight were constructed in Victoria at the HMA Naval Dockyard in Williamstown. It demonstrates the development of the Victorian ship building industry during World War II, and the service of those Victorians who served on her in Pacific theatres of war as part of the Royal Australian Navy. [ Criterion A] HMAS Castlemaine is the only known intact World War II naval ship in Victoria. It is only one of two extant Bathurst-class Minesweepers in Australia, the other being displayed on land in South Australia, and the only one in the world remaining in a nautical setting. It is one of only a handful of World War II warships which survive in Australia. [ Criterion B] HMAS Castlemaine is a notable example of a World War II naval ship. Despite being stripped of much of her wartime equipment, the superstructure and internal configuration of this Bathurst-class Minesweeper remains intact. Her subsequent restoration was undertaken largely using parts from other Bathurst-class Minesweepers or new elements constructed using original materials and specifications. As a result, the ship closely resembles her 1945 configuration, and displays the principal characteristics of a Bathurst-class Minesweeper in a way that allows the class to be easily understood and appreciated. The HMAS Castlemaine retains her nautical setting and operational capacity. [ Criterion D] HMAS Castlemaine is socially significant for her connection to the servicemen who fought on her and other Bathurst-class Minesweepers during World War II. Between 1940 and 1945 some 10,000 Allied servicemen served on Bathurst class Minesweepers, including many Victorians. As the only remaining intact World War II naval ship in the State, it is one of the few places that offers Victorians a first-hand insight into veterans' war experiences. The ship contributes to Victoria's identity and plays an important role in the education of future generations. [ Criterion G]

## Extent of Registration

Heritage Act 2017 NOTICE OF REGISTRATION As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including an object in the Heritage Register: Number: H2407 Category: Registered Object Object: H.M.A.S Castlemaine Location: Gem Pier, Williamstown Municipality: Hobsons Bay All of the Bathurst Class Minesweeper known as HMAS Castlemaine 10 DECEMBER 2020 STEVEN AVERY Executive Director

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*