

Corevette Veteran's Club

1st January 2013

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Navy Engineers

"The Navy, perhaps more than any other of the Services is dependent on a high quality of engineering skill and practice. All our ships and planes, the establishment which designs and builds them and the equipment which operates and arms them could not exist without the engineer and technical expert."

Fleet Admiral Ernest J King, USN

Throughout history naval forces have been quick to adopt improved technology, thereby gaining a capability advantage and allowing their parent nations to better pursue their national maritime aims. The exploitation of steam power, the internal combustion engine, controlled nuclear fission, the electromagnetic spectrum, solid state electronics and information processing, have each in turn led to a revolution in the capabilities that enable sea power, and thereby the means by which maritime strategy may be executed.

No finer example of the broader contribution technical sailors make through demonstrating the Navy's values can be found than Chief Stoker Alfred Wrench (refer to this edition's sailor profile).

Message from the President

Australia Day is a special day for all Australians, to come together to celebrate what is great about our nation – our rich history and our promising future.

The Australian Navy is proud to have been involved in a variety of Australia Day events around the country. This is Australia's national day and is celebrated on January 26th to mark the anniversary of the arrival of the first fleet into Sydney Cove in 1788. Each year, the Australian Defence Force participates in a range of celebratory activities to demonstrate its support for Australia's largest civic event.

On Australia Day 2013 please remember that more than 3000 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel deployed on operations around the world.

Bob McGavin
President

HMAS Castlemaine began her involvement in the hazardous task of supporting the Australian and Allied troops engaged in guerrilla operations against the Japanese occupation forces in Timor

HMAS Castlemaine

HMAS Castlemaine was commissioned at Melbourne on 17 June 1942 under the command of LCDR Philip J. Sullivan RANR (S). After commissioning Castlemaine proceeded to Sydney for completion and working up exercises, the latter comprising three days in Broken Bay, and escorting convoys from Sydney to Melbourne until she sustained damage in a collision with a Manly ferry in Sydney Harbour on the night of 11 August 1942.

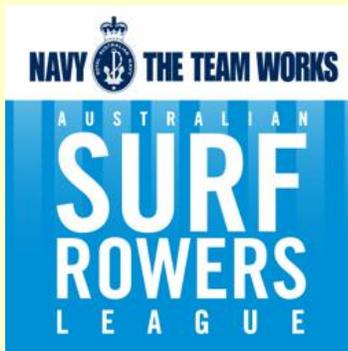
Castlemaine was engaged in escorting vessels from Townsville to Port Moresby for a few weeks after which she sailed for Darwin, arriving there on 5 October 1942. Almost immediately Castlemaine began her involvement in the hazardous task of supporting the Australian and Allied troops engaged in guerrilla operations against the Japanese occupation forces in Timor.

In September 1973 the Minister for Defence announced that the Government had decided to make a gift of Castlemaine to the Maritime Trust of Australia, to become a maritime museum. She was transferred later in the year.

Upcoming Events

Here are some upcoming events for the Corvette's Veteran's Club over the next few months. Hope to see you all there.

Australia Day	January 26
Anniversary of the Darwin Bombing	February 19
Anzac Day	April 25
Queen's Birthday Lunch	June 10
Naval Conference	June 24 – June 25
Melbourne Cup Luncheon	November 5
Remembrance Day	November 11



2013 Navy Australian Surf Rowers League

The 2013 Navy Australian Open comes to Stockton and is the culmination of 28 events held around Australia as part of the 2012-13 Australian Surf Rowers League (ASRL) series. This is the biggest surf boat racing event in Australia with over 400 crews competing from 100 Surf Life Saving Clubs across Australia.

Date: 8 February 2013 to 10 February 2013

Time: Refer to schedule on the website

Where: Stockton Surf Lifesaving Club, Stockton Beach, Stockton, NSW

Website: www.navy.gov.au/event/2013-navy-australian-surf-rowers-league-australian-open

Cost: Nil for spectators

Sailor Profile: Alfred James Wrench

Wrench, Alfred James (1904-1987), seaman, was born on 4 May 1904 at Airly, in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales.

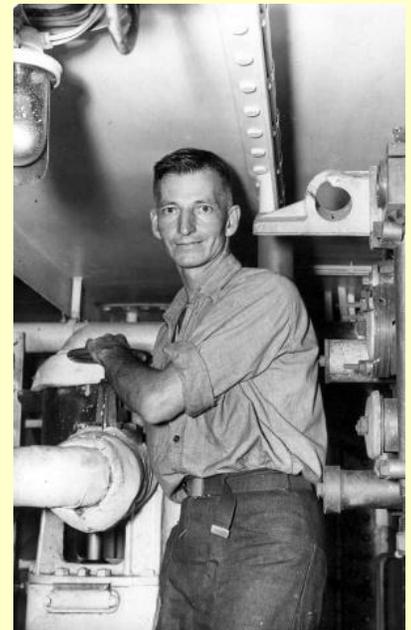
At the outbreak of World War II, in September 1939, Wrench had the technical and leadership skills that the RAN required. He was posted to the old destroyer HMAS Waterhen and travelled with her to join the British Mediterranean Fleet. Wrench served in the Mediterranean for the first two years of the war. He was promoted to Chief Stoker in October 1940, the highest non-commissioned rank in his branch at that time, and transferred to HMAS Vampire. He participated in the Greece and Crete operations, the Malta convoys, and the 'Tobruk ferry' which supplied the Australian garrison at Tobruk. Wrench later received a mentioned-in-dispatches for 'outstanding zeal, patience, and cheerfulness and for setting an example of whole-hearted devotion to duty' during his Mediterranean service on Vampire.

The destroyer Vampire, with Wrench onboard, was sent to Singapore for refit in May 1941. When Japan entered the war Vampire was once again in the thick of the fighting. Throughout March 1942 Vampire operated with the small carrier HMS Hermes in the Indian Ocean. On 9 April 1942, however, both ships were sunk by a ferocious Japanese air attack while off the coast of Ceylon. Despite determined resistance, at least 13 bombs hit Vampire and she sank within minutes. During this action, Wrench had been the senior hand of the starboard pompom, which had a stoker's gun crew. Once again he was mentioned-in-dispatches, for 'he showed coolness and courage throughout the action and kept his gun firing until the crew was finally washed from the platform.'

After returning to Australia, Wrench joined the corvette HMAS Armidale operating out of Darwin. He was fortunate to have left the ship before Armidale was lost to Japanese aircraft off Timor on 1 December 1942. His next seagoing service was in the frigate HMAS Gascoyne, which operated as a survey vessel in support of the US Navy's Seventh Amphibious Force during its advance across New Guinea into the Philippines from 1943 to 1945. Once more in the heat of the action, Wrench took part in the battle off Guivan during the Leyte Gulf operations on Christmas Eve 1944. The Dutch transport MV Sommelsdijk, lying nearby Gascoyne, was hit and set on fire by a Japanese aerial torpedo. Some 1300 US troops were rescued from the burning ship; subsequently volunteers from Gascoyne and the USS Buttonwood controlled the damage onboard the Sommelsdijk until the flames were successfully extinguished. Wrench spent the entire night of 25/26 December 1944 fighting these serious fires in the Number One and Two Holds of the Sommelsdijk. He 'supervised the work of all equipment and men and assisted in the inspection of the still smouldering holds when the fires were coming under control', is receiving the British Empire Medal for his courage, leadership and devotion to duty. He was proud to be selected as one of the small number of men representing the RAN at the Victory Parade in London held on 8 June 1946.

After 22 years of distinguished service in the RAN, Alfred Wrench was demobilised on 1 July 1948, although he continued to employ his technical skills in the commercial environment. He died on 30 November 1987 at Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick, Sydney.

Source: <http://www.navy.gov.au/biography/seaman-alfred-james-wrench>.



*Alfred James Wrench (1904-1987)
served on the HMAS Waterhen and
HMAS Armidale during World War II.*