



NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

VIC-TAS DIVISION

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“Keeping Watch over the Maritime Wellbeing of Australia”

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MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Whilst it is a happy time for some, the Festive Season is a very sad time for others with loved ones passing away. So – toast absent friends and relatives this Christmas, help keep alive their memory. They will always be a part of us, whether it is because we have the same sense of humour, interests or physical attributes,

This month, LCDR Brian John Bird RNR passed over the bar. Our condolences to his family and especially to Jane Teasdale, Executive Committee member and John’s partner for over 20 years.

There is also good news – read the story of members of the Submarine Force based at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia who recently gifted food and toys to the local St Vincent de Paul charity. Australia’s newest warship, HMAS *Brisbane*, arrived home to family and friends in Sydney yesterday, following her first overseas deployment.

VALE LCDR BRIAN JOHN BIRD RNR



13 July 1925 – 23 November 2019

Naval Officer, Navigator, Architect, Gentleman

John, the quintessential English gentleman. But there was a lot more to John than being a gentleman, as whatever endeavour he chose to pursue, he excelled in.

As a schoolboy in war torn England he joined the Air Training Corp and quickly reached the highest rank a cadet could achieve. When old enough at 17 years of age he volunteered for the Navy, joining in 1942. Naturally he was chosen for aircrew, a very hazardous role in flying off aircraft carriers in war time, the chances of surviving the war were low.

John commenced his basic training at HMS St Vincent joining the 64th Observer Course for the 3-month basic training. The training was demanding with a failure rate of about 50%. Naturally John passed and moved on to HMS Excellent, the RN Gunnery School. John excelled again, and was put in charge on the parade ground and elsewhere. Quite an honour. Next, he went to the Communication School at HMS Raven. John clearly did well, for he was then appointed to HMS Goshawk in Trinidad for flying training.

To get to Trinidad John travelled by convoy on board a merchant ship, the SS Andes. He sailed across the Atlantic to New York. You can imagine what it must have been like, having left war torn Britain behind, with its bombing and strict food rationing and suddenly arriving in “The Big Apple” with bright lights, lovely food and free tickets to theatres, concerts and cinemas.



He then travelled down to New Orleans to join SS George Washington for passage to Trinidad and training to be a Navigator.

He tells an amusing story – well, a few amusing stories – but I will only mention one. During an early navigational exercise, he was flying south over the Gulf of Trinidad with his head down to determine the correct moment to turn North. The pilot asked in a quiet voice when they should turn north. John, engrossed in his charts responded “soon”. The pilot then suggested John should look over the side. John did and to his embarrassment discovered they were flying over the delta of the Orinoco River, several miles inside the border of Venezuela, a neutral country. The pilot turned north very quickly. John must have impressed his instructors for he passed his course was commissioned and sailed back to England via New York in the Queen Mary. John now joined the war. His first appointment was to HMS Fencer, an escort carrier. He swept the Eastern Atlantic looking for U Boats. John told me the most dangerous part was taking off and landing on such a small deck. He then joined 818 Squadron operating out of Scotland carrying out anti-submarine patrols over the North Sea. John told me on a night patrol he made one contact, dropping depth charges, the radar contact disappeared.

On the completion of the war John joined the HMS Theseus, a new light fleet carrier. Even in peace time flying from a carrier is a dangerous pastime. In his first week on board Theseus, they lost 5 aircraft.

John had a love for architecture, so he applied to and was accepted by the Royal West of England Academy of Architecture to study for professional qualification as an Architect. John practised for some years as an Architect in Bristol for the B A E. However, the Navy was in his blood and he remained in the RNR. John continued flying with the Channel Air Division, gaining a “A” licence for gliding.

In 1956 the Navy disbanded the reserve air squadron. John then became an RNR Executive Officer and appointed as a Mine Sweeper in the Navigating Office. John clearly impressed again, as he was appointed next year as first lieutenant and when his captain was taken ill, he was appointed in command of the ton class mine sweeper, HMS Venture.

John moved to New Zealand where he spent 12 years and was founding secretary of the Northland Division of the Navy League of New Zealand.

On emigrating to Australia John played a very active role in the Navy League of Australia. In 1976 he became the State President, a position he held for 16 successful years. He was also Federal Vice President for 25 years. Very impressive.

As an architect he designed major buildings for the Bougainville Mine Township, and he also designed the Auckland Police Station.

We have lost a friend, mentor and hero. John, we will miss you.

CONGRATULATIONS MR RAY GILL JP LM



Ray Gill JP receives his Award from LCDR Roger Blythman

Ray Gill JP LM has received his award of Life Membership from the Federal Council of the Navy League of Australia. He has been a Justice of the Peace at Glen Waverley since 2007. Ray has been a dedicated Executive Committee member of the Navy League of Australia Victoria Division, holding various positions, for 52 years.

Ray is very active in a number of organisations, including: Board member of the Weary Dunlop Foundation since 2002 and Secretary from 2010-2019; Board Member of the Battle for Australia Commemoration Committee since 2000; Member of the Naval Association of Australia since 1965 and National Vice President of the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council in Brisbane.

He truly deserves this Navy League award. Congratulations Ray.

BRISBANE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

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<https://news.navy.gov.au/en/Dec2019/Fleet/5647/Brisbane-home-for-Christmas.htm#Xf3EGUczblU>

Australia's newest warship, HMAS *Brisbane*, arrived home to family and friends in Sydney yesterday, following her first overseas deployment.

Brisbane's arrival drew to a close the return of ten Royal Australian Navy warships from deployments across South East Asia, the Pacific and the United States.

Over the past several months Navy's warships have conducted complex exercises with our partners, building on our respective skills and helping to keep our region secure.

Brisbane's five month deployment saw the Hobart class Destroyer put through her paces, including combat system testing off the West Coast of the United States. Commanding Officer, Commander Josh Wilson, said in a first for the Royal Australian Navy, *Brisbane* completed a live cooperative missile engagement with the United States Navy.

HMAS *Brisbane* is the second of three 147-metre long Australian-built Hobart class Destroyers and is designed to provide air defence for groups of ships, in addition to land forces and infrastructure in coastal areas, against missiles and aircraft. The ship is equipped with a Mk41 Vertical Launch System with SM-2 Standard Missiles and Evolved Sea Sparrow missiles, a Mk45 5-inch main gun, Phalanx Close-In Weapons System, two 25mm Typhoon guns, and MU90 and Mk54 light-weight torpedoes for subsurface defence.

HMAS STIRLING GIFTING TO ST VINCENT DE PAUL



<https://news.navy.gov.au/en/Dec2019/Community/5648/Submarine-Force-brings-Christmas-joy-to-families.htm#.Xf3fq0czblU>

In maintaining ties and involvement with the local community, members of the Submarine Force based at HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia recently gifted food and toys to the local St Vincent de Paul charity.

Throughout the year, the Submarine Force has carried out fund raising activities with the intention of providing local families in need a little something extra during the Christmas period.

Leading Seaman Christian Thom, representing the Submarine Force said it was satisfying to see all the items collected throughout the year combined into one significant donation.

“We have conducted a series of morning teas and fundraising luncheons to raise money throughout the year.

“The intent was to purchase a selection of items that we thought might bring a bit of Christmas cheer to those in need during the festive season,” Leading Seaman Thom said.

When the last of the fundraising activities were completed, the final donations were added to the baskets, which were prepared for delivery by the Submarine Force team.

St Vincent de Paul Regional President Mr Edward Wolanski, his wife Wendy and Mrs Lily Tan of Penola By the Sea Convent, accepted the donations and will be responsible for distributing the items to those in need within the local area.

Home is where you make it, and for those members and their families posted to *Stirling*, getting involved in the local community is part of making the local area their true home.

NHS DINNER - GUEST SPEAKER CHIEF OF NAVY



VADM Mike Noonan with Rex Williams and Alf Bachelder

The final event of the year for the Naval Historical Society of Australia (Victorian Chapter) was a dinner at the RSL Waverley, on 6 December 2019. The Guest of Honour was the NHS Patron, the Chief of Navy, VADM Mike Noonan AO RAN. His very interesting speech is available as a podcast on the sub-domain of the Navy Victoria Network website (www.nhsavic.navyvic.net). Prior to joining guests in the Sunset Room, VADM Noonan unveiled a plaque commemorating the completion of the display of naval artefacts in the Display cabinets located in the Warramunga Restaurant. These excellent displays are the result of the efforts of members of the Warramunga Association and in particular, Marty Grogan.

Both Frank Cronin and Rex Williams received certificates of Life Membership presented by VADM Noonan, and they were utterly delighted with this honour.



Frank Cronin



Rex Williams

SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE



Help us to honour them New weekly Last Post Service

At the end of day, every Sunday from 4.45pm, you are invited to join us to honour those who have served. Commemorate with us during a poignant reading of *The Ode* by a veteran. See the Shrine Guard in historic uniform lower the Australian flag. Listen as a Piper plays as a wreath is laid. Reflect as a Bugler sounds the *Last Post*.

By coming together for this special service we recognise the veteran community across conflicts from the Second World War onwards.

This new initiative, announced by the Premier of Victoria The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP on Remembrance Day 2018, is an opportunity for us all to come together to remember them—now and forever.

The Last Post Service is supported by the Victorian Government.

If you are a current serving member of the Defence Force or a Veteran

This service seeks to honour service people and veterans and it is important to us that they not only attend, but also take part. We are inviting current service men and women and veterans to participate in the wreath laying and recite the Ode as a representative of the collective service of all who have served. If you would like to take part please contact us at ceremonies@shrine.org.au or on 03 9661 8100 to register your interest.

If you would like to lay a wreath

Wreaths and floral tributes are encouraged. If you would like to lay a wreath during a service please contact us at ceremonies@shrine.org.au or on 03 9661 8100.

EVERY DAY CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Inspire young imaginations with stories and artefacts of the past with the Shrine Kids any-time activities. Collect an Explorer Kit from the Visitor Centre to enhance your next family visit.

Four different Shrine Kids activity cards provide a starting point for fresh perspectives of the historic Shrine of Remembrance and its fascinating stories and objects. Children are asked to consider and conjure their creative responses to a range of questions related to different aspects of the Shrine.



Armed with an Explorer Kit, make your next visit to the Shrine a memorable one with something the whole family can enjoy.

There are four activity cards to choose from:

- Unlock the Secrets!
- Discover How Things Work!
- Use Your Imagination!
- Solve the Mysteries!
- Explorer Kit satchels include:
 - Finger puppet
 - Notebook
 - Pencil
 - Arm Band (brassard)
 - Periscope
 - Magnifying glass
 - Kaleidoscope
 - Compass
 - Picture Book

When you have finished exploring, place all the items back in the satchel and return the kit to the Visitor Centre.

The learning principles that support Shrine Kids stem from the concept of play being integral to effective teaching and learning. In addition to the learning benefits behind Shrine Kids, the activities provides a great opportunity for families to come together and experience and learn together.

STOP PRESS – SUMMER HOLIDAY PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN 2020

GIFTS IN A BILLY

Experiment with a billy and a selection of items just like the ones sent to the ANZACS in 1915. Write a message to currently deployed ADF personnel. 11.30-12.30 weekdays from 2-10 January.

MY SHRINE STORY

Gather your stories at the Shrine. Produce your own creative guide and many other activities. 11.30-1pm weekdays from 13 -24 January.

MY FAVOURITE THINGS

Discover your favourite things in the underground treasure trove. We invite families to join a guided walk 12pm, 1pm or 2pm weekdays from 2-24 January.

Bookings required for talks and events. Cost \$5.

Shrine podcasts are available at <http://www.shrine.org.au/Whats-On/Video-and-Podcasts>

Website: <http://www.shrine.org.au> Telephone 9661 8100