



BROADSIDE

July 2021

Volume 11 Edition 7

Editorial



This edition of Broadside focusses on the little known but highly commendable achievements of 300 Royal Australian Naval Reservists who, finding that there were no available billets for them on HMA warships at the outbreak of the First World War, volunteered to join a unique land-based engineering unit where their rigging, wagon-driving, shipwright and other Artificer skills could be put to good use in support of Army land and amphibious operations in Europe.

The 1st Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train (1st RANBT) was formed in Melbourne on 28 February 1915. As it was intended to be a horse-drawn engineering unit that would be attached to the Royal Naval Division (RND), then serving as infantry on the Western Front, the term 'train', in its title, was a direct reference to the horse drawn wagons that would, in theory, form and move 'in train' to carry the unit's heavy lumber, building materials and engineering equipment to the front. Due to their land-based working environment, members of the 1st RANBT were approved to wear khaki uniforms. Apart from the distinguishing brass 'anchor' cap badges and collar tabs, their shoulder patches and rank chevrons broadly aligned with the uniform worn by Army 'Sappers' in the 1st AIF.



Driver Joseph Darmody. Visible on his cap and collars are the distinguishing oxidised brass anchors adopted by the 1st RANBT.

Appointed in command of the 1st RANBT was Lieutenant Commander Leighton Seymour Bracegirdle, RAN. Bracegirdle was ideally suited to command the unit, having seen active service with the NSW Naval

Events Calendar

(see [Calendar](#) for full details)

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NOTE: Due to COVID-19, it is advisable to check with the coordinators to confirm whether the event you were planning to attend is still going ahead. We will endeavour to keep the Diary updated as news comes to hand.

At present the Shrine of Remembrance is closed, but ceremonies are still being conducted and they are live streamed on the Shrine's [Facebook page](#).

31 Jul – The Cube concert Wodonga – RAN Jazz ensemble

04 Aug – Soundwaves concert

08 Aug – Op Pedestal service

09 Aug – HMAS Canberra service

15 Aug – Victory in the Pacific

17 Aug – Normandy Veterans Association Ceremony

18 Aug – Vietnam Veterans Service

20 Aug – Recruit School graduation

25 Aug – Soundwaves Concert

28 Aug - 05 Sep – Legacy Badge Week Collections

29 Aug – N' Class Destroyers Service

29 Aug – Fleet Air Arm Association Memorial Service

31 Aug – Korean Veterans Service

01 Sep – Battle for Australia Memorial Service

03 Sep – Merchant Navy Day Service

08 Sep – Soundwaves concert

Brigade during the Boxer Rebellion in China as well as serving as a military officer in the South African Irregular Horse during the Boer War in 1901. He had also recently returned from German New Guinea where he had served as a staff officer in the joint Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) responsible for the capture of the German colonies in the Pacific in September 1914.

(Note: For a full account of this Officer's outstanding career, please follow the link to this month's 'Navy Hero' at the end of this edition of Broadside.)

After undertaking initial training in horsemanship, engineering and pontoon bridging at the Domain in Melbourne, in late May 1915 the 1st RANBT received orders to deploy to Britain to complete its training and then to join the RND on the Western Front. The plan, however, never eventuated.



Men of the 1st RANBT in Melbourne prior to deploying for overseas service in 1915. (Angus Lang collection)

On 4 June 1915 the 1st RANBT sailed from Melbourne in the troopship Port Macquarie bound for active service. While crossing the Indian Ocean new orders were received diverting the ship to Bombay where their horses were disembarked due to an outbreak of illness. The 1st RANBT was then sent to Egypt arriving at Port Said on 17 July where its men were instructed to stand by for new orders concerning their future. A few days later the unit re-embarked in the troopship with instructions to proceed to Mudros, on the Greek island of Lemnos. On arrival Bracegirdle learned that he and his men were to provide engineering support in connection with the British landings at Suvla Bay to the north of Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. During that time, they were to be under British command and control. From Mudros the 1st RANBT transferred to the Greek Island of Imbros which was used as a staging area for the landings at Suvla Bay.

Early on the morning of 7 August 1915 the 1st RANBT landed under fire at Suvla Bay from the transport *Itria*. Its first task was to construct a pontoon pier to enable supplies and reinforcements

Latest Videos, Podcasts and News Headlines

The full articles of the news items listed below can be found on our website:
<https://navyvic.net/news/news.html>

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VIDEOS.....

- Working with uniform Navy personnel on the CEDP
- CEDP skills and highlights
- Why apply for the CEDP? (Civilian Engineer Development Program)
- Talisman Sabre 2021 - Live Fire Mission
- PLA Navy's newest Type 052D Destroyer "Suzhou" 132
- Gunfire exercise on board HMAS Ballarat
- Patriot missile launch
- Soundwaves
- Talisman Sabre 2021 ADF Director Message
- Centenary of RAN Communications Training at HMAS Cerberus
- Delivering amphibious forces - Exercise Sea Explorer
- HMAS Ballarat committed to Indo-Pacific maritime security
- Students taste military life with Defence Work Experience Program
- HMAS Ballarat concludes regional deployment

PODCAST.....

Murder, Mutiny and Political Controversy in the Royal Australian Navy.

NEWS.....

Sixty-eight years ago on 27th July, the Korean War Armistice was signed, marking the end of a three year conflict. Of the more than 17,000 Australians who fought, some 340 lost their lives to defend South Korea, over 1,216 were wounded and 29 became prisoners of war.

The Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group is making its way into the South

to be brought quickly ashore. The campaign ashore at Suvla was ill-conceived and poorly led with the advance soon becoming bogged down and dissolving into trench warfare, similar to that experienced at Anzac Cove and Cape Helles.



Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, where the 1st RANBT landed in August 1915.

The 1st RANBT set up its camp at what became known as Kangaroo Beach. It was responsible for a wide variety of tasks including building and maintaining wharves and piers, unloading stores from lighters, controlling the supply of fresh water to front line troops, stock-piling engineering equipment, building a light railway for stores movements and carrying out repairs in an open-air workshop.

These activities took place under frequent enemy artillery fire and occasional air raids which, during their five months at Suvla Bay, killed two and wounded over 30 of its number. Two more men succumbed to disease and many others became sick or were injured in the course of their duties. Despite the regular arrival of reinforcements from Australia, the unit was always under strength due to illness or casualties.



Turkish artillery bursting beside one of the piers constructed by the 1st RANBT at Suvla Bay.

In December 1915, the decision to abandon the Gallipoli

China Sea with some ships already there ahead of carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08). The strike group has partially disaggregated into different elements following the conclusion of Exercise Konkan with the Indian Navy, held from 21 to 22 July in the Bay of Bengal.

Peering through the scope of his F88 rifle, Leading Seaman William Lete and his team in HMAS Brisbane entered a compartment to clear the space of potential threats. This was part of the training for the quick-response force and boarding party, duties most commonly undertaken by boatswains mates who specialise in weapons handling.

Like many musicians in the Royal Australian Navy Band, Able Seaman Donna Chung has a diverse background. Able Seaman Chung was born in Hong Kong, raised in Melbourne, and lived and studied in Europe.

As an Anzac class frigate, HMAS Ballarat is designed for, and ready to fight in, the 'blue water' domain of the high seas. Using a mixture of Navy Rigid-Hulled Inflatable Boats (RHIB) and Army Zodiac small craft to approach the vessel, 2RAR soldiers practiced embarking and disembarking using rope ladders to access the uppermost decks.

It is the heart of the ship – the centre where information flows between ships sailing together. The Communications Centre is among the most important compartments on board and is manned by personnel like Able Seaman Tamara Shingles, whose role is pivotal to her ship's readiness to fight.

Five navies have united off Australia's eastern coast to sail in formation during Exercise Talisman Sabre (TS21). Warships from Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea and the US came together off the coast of Queensland to showcase their ability to operate as a

Peninsula was made and Allied troops were soon being evacuated from the beaches under the cover of darkness. The operation required the wharves to be in constant use and the men of the 1st RANBT were kept busy repairing damage caused by enemy artillery, the elements, normal use and through accident.



A motor light loaded with troops leaves a pier built by the 1st RANBT during the first stage of the December 1915 evacuation.

The bulk of the men of the 1st RANBT were evacuated from Suvla Bay on the nights of 16 and 17 December 1915, but a small group of 50, under the command of Sub Lieutenant Charles William Hicks, remained behind at Lala Baba Beach, in the southern part of Suvla Bay, to maintain the wharf over which the British rear-guard would leave from. These men were kept busy maintaining the wharf, often damaged by shell fire, and were not evacuated until 0430 on the morning of 20 December 1915; thus the sailors of the 1st RANBT became the last Australian's to leave the Gallipoli Peninsula. The last AIF troops having left Anzac Cove at 0410 the same day.

The following month, the 1st RANBT was sent to the Suez Canal Zone to operate various 'swinging' pontoon bridges in use there at that time. These bridges were used to allow men, horses, camels and vehicles to cross the canal before being 'broken' to allow ships to pass through it. Again, the 1st RANBT was placed under British command during this period.

A welcome break from the morale-sapping tedium of maintaining

single force and put their collective mariner skills to the test.

Apart from an MH-60R helicopter, HMAS Ballarat also carries an S-100 Schiebel Camcopter, an unmanned aerial vehicle that offers enhanced surveillance capability at sea. A small detachment from 822X Squadron at the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm is conducting trials with the 3.1-m long rotorcraft as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre (TS21).

Managing risk in the submarine transition: Is there a Plan B? In my last post, I looked at the latest information on the life-of-type extension program for the Royal Australian Navy's Collins-class submarines.

The British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (RO8) and its carrier strike group carried out a two-day exercise called Exercise Konkan with the Indian Navy from July 21 to 22 in the Bay of Bengal.

Vietnamese naval ships arrived in Vladivostok in the Russian Far East to take part in the celebrations of Russia's Navy Day, the press office of the Russian Pacific Fleet reported on Thursday (Jul 22).

Two men believed to have been the first service personnel killed on Australian soil as a result of enemy action during World War II have been remembered. A memorial service was held on July 16 at Beachport for Royal Australian Navy able seamen Thomas W Todd and William E L Danswan, who were killed on July 14, 1941, near the South Australian town when a sea mine exploded while they were attempting to render it safe.

Leading Seaman Medic Abbey-Rose Yeomans has been recognised for her efforts in helping an evacuated member of the public from Mallacoota during the

and operating its assigned bridges over the Suez Canal throughout 1916 came on 22 December 1916 when, as part of an Allied amphibious assault on the Turkish coastal town of El Arish, a 50-man detachment of the 1st RANBT constructed two piers over which supplies could be landed from ships.

Due to the good work done at El Arish, the 1st RANBT was advised by British authorities that they were to be relieved of their duties on the Suez Canal and were to be attached to the forces advancing into Palestine. It was then, however, that events took a dramatic turn for the 1st RANBT.

Complaints from many of the members of the 1st RANBT about what they considered to be an inappropriate use of their specialised skills on largely non-combatant duties on the Suez Canal swing bridges had been raised in Federal Parliament. Following consultation with the senior Australian officer in the Middle East, Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, a recommendation was made that the unit be disbanded and its men used as reinforcements for the AIF. Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle was subsequently advised that his unit was to be officially disbanded on 27 March 1917.



The men of the 1st RANBT ensured that when the unit was disbanded their achievements were appropriately commemorated. (Angus Lang collection)

By mid-April 1917, nearly half of the 1st RANBT complement had transferred to the AIF. Several others transferred to other services including the RAN, RN, Royal Flying Corps and the Egyptian Labour Corps. The remaining 177 men elected to return to Australia for discharge and, on 29 May 1917, they embarked in

2020 bushfires.

On a visit to US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) in Hawaii, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace met with the Commander Admiral John C Aquilino and announced that the UK Carrier Strike Group will undertake a series of multinational exercises with global allies in the Philippine Sea this August.

A pair of shells flew over the water and slammed into Townshend Island within the Shoalwater Bay Training Area on the afternoon of July 18. At sea, the five-inch guns of HMAS Ballarat and USS Rafael Peralta unleashed a further barrage of rounds, beginning the Exercise Talisman Sabre 2021 firepower demonstration.

On 11 July 2021, I confirmed that after twenty years, all Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel had departed Afghanistan, bringing our nation's longest war to a close. A national day of Commemoration will now be established to ensure that we, as a nation, formally recognise the service and sacrifice of Defence personnel and their families who helped to save Australian lives from terrorist attacks on our own soil.

The forward-deployed ships of Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 7, along with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, arrive off the coast of Australia in preparation for the biennial bilateral exercise Talisman Sabre 21 (TS21), 16 July.

The latest Block V Virginia Class submarine will greatly increase the number of missiles which can be carried. In effect this will make it a cruise missile submarine (SSGN).

Managing risk in the submarine transition: the latest on the Collins life-of-type extension.

the troopship Bulla which arrived in Melbourne on 8 July 1917. The bulk of the men were discharged on 22 July although some later re-enlisted in the AIF or the ANMEF for garrison duties in New Guinea.

Eight of the 1st RANBT's number died while serving overseas on active service.

Rank	Name	Fate	Date
Petty Officer	Phillip Le Sueur	DOD	16 Aug 1915
Able Seaman	Thomas McDonnell	DOD	27 Aug 1915
Chief Petty Officer	Edward Perkins	KIA	06 Sep 1915
Able Seaman	Charles Schenke	DOW	08 Sep 1915
Lieutenant	Thomas Addis-Black	DOD	07 Apr 1916
Able Seaman	John Barry	DOD	07 Aug 1916
Able Seaman	Keith Jarvis	DOD	30 Dec 1916
Able Seaman	Robert Armstrong	Drowned	01 Jan 1917

In recognition of his leadership, Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and mentioned in dispatches on three separate occasions. Sixteen of his men were also mentioned in dispatches and several others went on to distinguish themselves in the AIF and RAN winning a number of bravery awards.



Memorial plaque for the Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train (RANBT) near the shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, Victoria. The original plaque had the army emblem, but due to the efforts of Dr John Carroll and the HMAS Sydney Association (Vic) a new plaque with the RAN emblem was laid alongside the original.

The Defence Force School of Signals – Maritime Communication Information Systems Wing (DFSS-MCISW) marked 100 years of communications training at HMAS Cerberus on July 1.

The Australian military is closely tracking a high-tech Chinese surveillance ship making its way towards Queensland ahead of large-scale military exercises which begin this week.

The Queen Elizabeth (UK) and Ronald Reagan carrier strike groups (CSG), alongside the Iwo Jima amphibious ready group (ARG), conducted a large scale joint interoperability exercise in the Gulf of Aden, July 12.

Warships from Australia, Japan, South Korea and the US successfully completed Exercise Pacific Vanguard on July 9, the first time the annual quadrilateral event had been held in Australian waters.

Royal Marines have carried out raids on sun-scorched beaches in North Queensland at the beginning of a busy deployment alongside allies in Australia.

British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08) and its escorts are now operating in the Red Sea after transiting the Suez Canal on Tuesday, according to U.K. officials.

Leading Seaman Breanna Jacobs-Rochford was a long way from home when she recently attended the 150th Coming of the Light festival on Erub Island. Held on July 1, the festival celebrates the arrival of Christianity in the Torres Strait and people from the islands congregated on Erub Island for the festivities.

Navy's submarine-hunting and anti-surface warfare helicopters have successfully completed Exercise Tigerfish, proving the warfighting proficiency of aircrews from No. 816

So ended a fascinating chapter in the RAN's rich wartime history.

Source: [RAN website: article by John Perryman & Commander Greg Swinden, RAN](#)

Watch the YouTube video as Professor Tom Frame & his expert panel discuss the RAN Bridging Train. The panel consists of Mr John Perryman, Mr Martin Smee and Commander Greg Swinden. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhp7LzumzKU>)



Naval Heroes:

It is apt that our Naval Hero for this July edition of the NVN's "Broadside" is Rear Admiral Sir Leighton Seymour Bracegirdle, KCV, CMG, DSO, RAN, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train (1st RANBT) from its formation in Melbourne on 28 February 1915

until its disbandment on 27 March 1917. After World War 1, this distinguished Australian naval officer's career continued to flourish, culminating in his appointment as Official Secretary to four Australian governors-general: Sir Isaac Isaacs, Lord Gowrie, the Duke of Gloucester, and William McKell. His full naval biography (courtesy of the Royal Australian Navy website) can be found at the following link: <https://navyvic.net/heroes/bracegirdle.html>

Yours Aye!
NVN Team



If you know of any of our Navy family that has crossed the bar, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We will list their names in perpetuity on our special [Memorial Wall](#) on the website. If possible list their Rank, Name, Number, the date of their passing and their age.

- † AB L.S. Ruth, PA2882, 21 July 2021. Aged 97.
- † LCDR P. Mellish, O.747, 17 July 2021. Aged 82.
- † EMWE J.C. Duncan, R94409, 16 July 2021. Aged 72.
- † RO(S) G.J. Luttrell, R93232, 14 July 2021. Aged 76.
- † LSETS W. Bulloch, R62968, 12 July 2021. Aged 78.
- † Surg. CMDR J.H. Silver, 11 July 2021.
- † AB D.W. Brooks, H2371, 08 July 2021. Aged 96.
- † AB C.R. Barrie, 33891, 08 July 2021. Aged 93.
- † A/Plumber W.J. Whitehead, B4542, 28 June 2021. Aged 96.
- † ABRP L.J. Bradley, PM5039, 27 June 2021. Aged 96.
- † Coder F.G. West, 26279, 25 June 2021. Aged 96.

Squadron.

Warships from Australia, Japan, South Korea and the US have joined forces to conduct a series of high-end warfighting activities for five days. Royal Australian Navy destroyer HMAS Brisbane is working alongside the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer JS Makinami, the South Korea Navy destroyer Wang Geon and the United States Navy destroyer USS Rafael Peralta.

If you're racking your brain trying to remember the details of something that happened at sea in the past 40 years, the Naval History Section's online profiles are probably the best place to start looking. Although they recently published their 400th ship profile – of HMAS Pirie II – the team isn't resting on their laurels. They have hundreds more to compile and publish.

As a lasting legacy to a man who has done so much to preserve the memory of Australian First World War veterans and for Franco-Australian relations, former Mayor of Villers-Bretonneux, Dr Patrick Simon AO, has had a room dedicated in his name at the Sir John Monash Centre (SJMC). Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Liz Cosson AM CSC, said this is a fitting tribute at the centre of Australia's Anzac Centenary legacy on the Western Front, the SJMC.

The Royal Navy is testing drones to help rescue sailors who fall overboard. Remotely-piloted systems which locate personnel in the water, drop life-saving equipment and hover over the location until rescuers arrive have been tested extensively by Royal Navy tech experts on Horsea Island and at sea.

From 1 July 2021, the Income Free Areas and Assets Value Limits used to calculate rates of income support pensions under the Veterans'

- † LSCD J.R. Branch, R64433, 22 June 2021. Aged 74.
- † LSCD J.R. Carroll, 8107440, 12 June 2021. Aged 48.
- † LSATA R.A. Burt, R59994, 08 June 2021. Aged 78.
- † EM(AW) J.D. Deering, R54530, 06 June 2021. Aged 80.
- † AB G.J. Woodford, R54733, 27 May 2021. Aged 80.
- † ABME T.J. Minehan, R53016, 25 January 2021. Aged 82.
- † LS R.J. Charlesworth, W/1675, 08 January 2021. Aged 99.

Lest We Forget



Inquiry into unit recognition for ADF service in Somalia *Call for submissions*

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal has been directed to inquire into and report on recognition for Australian Defence Force units that served in Somalia between 1992 and 1995.

In particular, the Tribunal is to examine relevant evidence and consider whether it is appropriate that any Australian units that served in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 be awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation, or another form of further recognition for service.

In doing so, the Tribunal is to have regard to the eligibility criteria for the Meritorious Unit Citation, as set out in the Unit Citations Regulations, or other relevant Regulations.

The Tribunal is to report, in writing, to the Minister for Defence Personnel on the findings and recommendations that arise from the inquiry.

Submissions to the Tribunal close on 31 August 2021, and can be lodged online through the Tribunal's website. More information about making a submission can be found at:

<https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/inquiries/>

Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA) will rise.

Anzac-class frigate HMAS Perth was back in the water on July 1. She was lowered out of the dry dock at the Australian Marine Complex at Henderson, Western Australia, after completion of upgrades to her radar capabilities, communications systems and crew-habitable areas, which are a major part of the Anzac Midlife Capability Assurance Program.

A crew member in Australian Defence Vessel Cape Inscription has celebrated some significant milestones – and a birthday – while on patrol in support of Operation Resolute.

A new aircraft carrier, currently under construction in Shanghai, is the most visible sign of China's rapidly expanding navy. It is larger than China's current two carriers and differs in key aspects. But the natural comparison is to the U.S. Navy's latest carriers, the Ford Class.

HMAS Ballarat celebrated its 17th birthday on the day the ship finished its Regional Presence Deployment off the coast of the NT. Ballarat, which was commissioned on June 26, 2004, has sailed more than 500,000 nautical miles since she entered service, with the latest deployment adding 18,060 to that total.

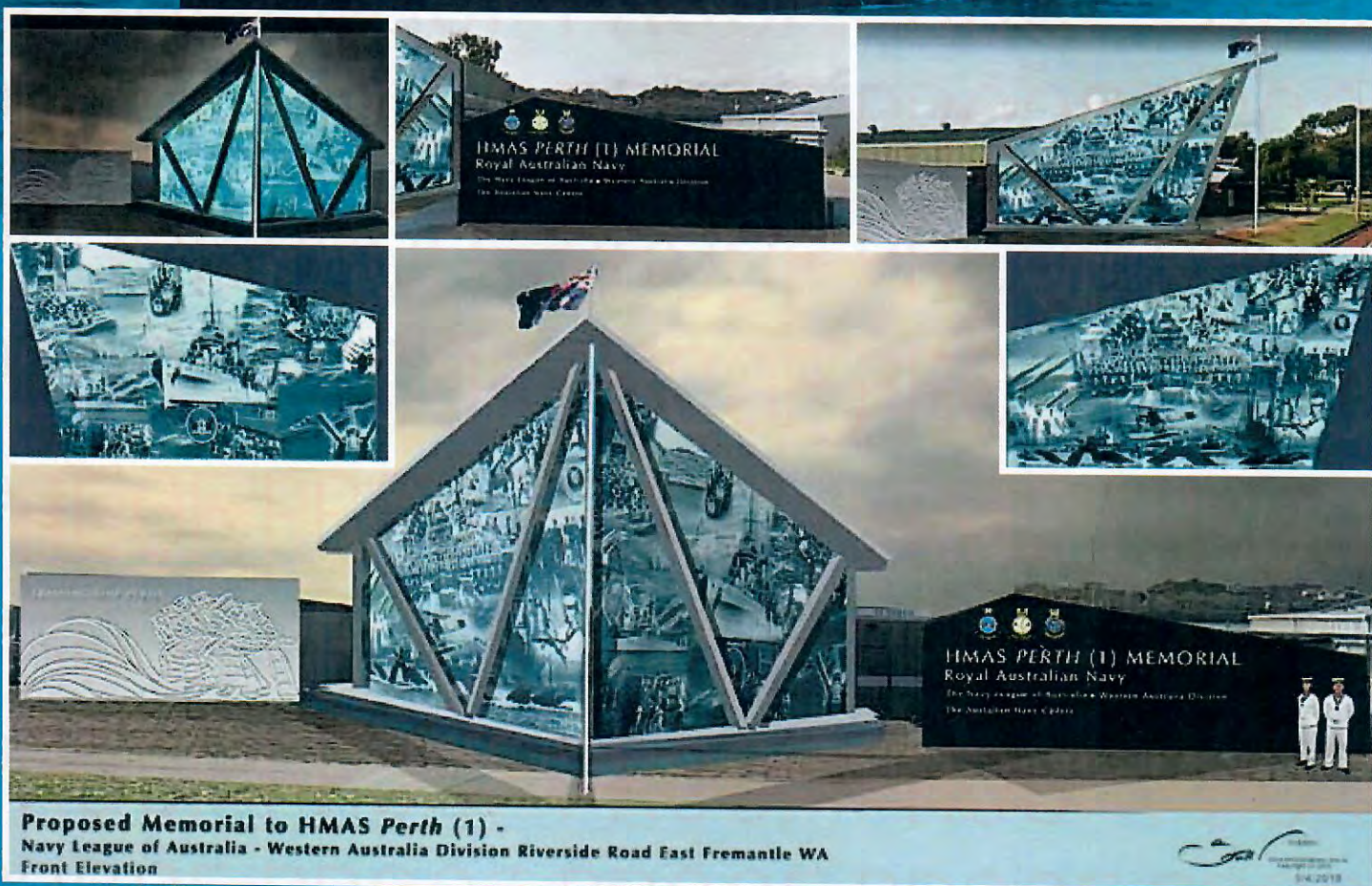
During HMAS Parramatta's recent port visit to Brunei, members of the ship's boarding party shared their skills virtually with their counterparts from the Royal Brunei Navy.

FlyBy – A periodical of the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia. [July issue....](#)

Visit our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page for more news articles not included in this newsletter.

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