



Welcome to the
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Monthly Ceremony.
Jack's Memorial
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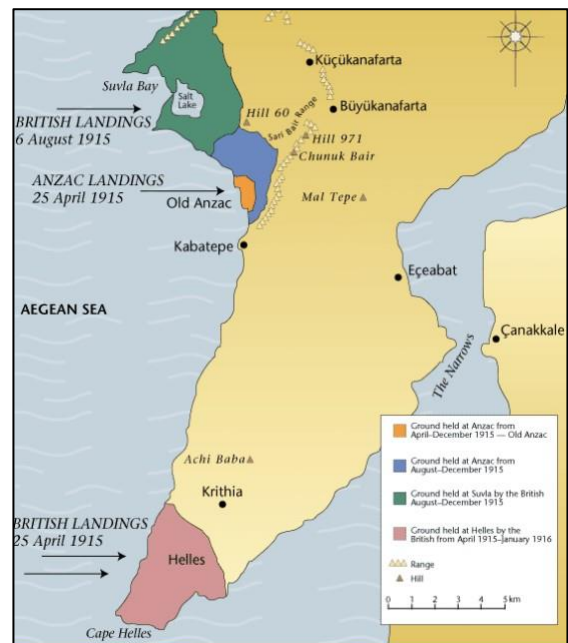
1st Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train



Thomas Arthur Bond was born in 1865 in Hampshire, England to George and Charlotte Bond. He worked as an accountant at the hardware store of Perry Bros Ltd in Brisbane. When war broke out in August 1914 he joined – at age 49 – the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) in operations against German possessions in the Pacific region. On 11 September 1914 the force attacked the wireless station at Bitapaka in German New Guinea.

During the Battle on the Road to Bitapaka, Bond reached the advance party and became its leader. The final clash occurred when the advance was closer to the wireless station. Bond was confronted by 8 German officers and 20 native police, apparently intent on defending the wireless station. Bond, aware he was covered, acted swiftly and daringly. He bounded to the Germans and snatched pistols from their holsters. This surprise act stunned the Germans and the native soldiers. The natives were positioned at rear of officers and could not fire for fear of hitting the Germans. Bond was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in recognition of his services during this engagement.

After his service with the Expeditionary Force, Bond was appointed First Lieutenant to Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle of the 1st Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train (RANBT) when it was formed in February 1915.



The Bridging Train commenced their training in horsemanship, engineering and pontoon bridging at the Melbourne Domain now the site of the Shrine of Remembrance. Bridging Train commander Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle and Bond soon discovered that there was no one left in Australia in either the Army or the Navy that had any useful knowledge on the subject of bridging trains and to add to their worries, they would have to wait six weeks for their bridging pontoons to be built at Cockatoo Dockyard in Sydney.

Due to the nature of their work ashore, the men of the 1st RANBT were dressed in the khaki uniform worn by soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Special badges were adopted to distinguish them as a naval unit which included oxidised brass anchors that were worn on the hats, caps, sleeves and collars of ratings' tunics.

Despite their lack of training on 4 June 1915 the Bridging Train now numbering 301 embarked aboard His Majesty's Australian Transport Ship PORT MACQUARIE. During the first segment of the voyage 79 of their 412 horses died due to over-heating and exhaustion. In Bombay now Mumbai all remaining horses were off

load and transferred to the India army. The Bridging Train finally arrived in Lemnos Island 15 Nautical Miles from Gallipoli Peninsula on 21 July.

On arrival Bracegirdle learned that he and his men were to provide engineering support in connection with the British landings at Suvla Bay 11 kms north of Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



The Bridging Train set up camp at what became known as Kangaroo Beach. It was responsible for 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. busy repairing damage caused by enemy artillery, the elements, normal use and through accident.

In December 1915 the decision to abandon the Gallipoli Peninsula was made and Allied troops were soon being evacuated from the beaches under the cover of darkness.

The final evacuation necessitated the building of a long and heavy 'I Crib' pier. Heavy timber was available from Mudros in a few days, but large bolts and iron dowels were unprocurable. The unit therefore decided to strip a wrecked "sand dredge and to make the bolts and dowels. A party was sent to cut up the rungs of the engine-room ladders and the round iron forming portion of the deck and bridge railing. This was brought ashore and, with the portable forges and stocks and dies with which the unit was equipped, the necessary bolts and dowels were completed in a few days.

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 04:30 on the morning of 20 December 1915; thus, the sailors of the 1st RANBT became the last Australians to leave the Gallipoli Peninsula. The last AIF troops having left Anzac Cove at 04:10 the same day.

Thus, with HMAS AE2 being the first allied warship to penetrate the Dardanelles prior to the ANZAC Cove landings, and members of the RAN Bridging being the last Australians to leave Gallipoli the saying goes Navy in First and the last to leave.

In July 1916 Bond was mentioned in dispatches 'for distinguished and gallant services rendered during the period of General Sir Charles Munro's Command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force' that is the campaign evacuation.

Following the evacuation of Gallipoli, the 1st RANBT was reconstituted at Imbros in December 1915/January 1916. During that time there was considerable unrest among its men. It was cold with driving wind and rain and many men did not take well to carrying out route marches, rifle exercises and company drill in light of their recent service on the front line. Compounding this was an administrative

oversight, that resulted in the men not being paid for over five weeks and on 13 January 1916, 189 men refused to parade or turn-to for work that morning.

Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle was at that time recovering from a bout of malaria in an Egyptian hospital and the unit was under the temporary command of the brave but taciturn second-in-command Lieutenant Thomas A. Bond, DSO, MID RANR. The unfortunate incident was quickly labelled a mutiny, a serious offence under naval law, and those involved were disarmed and placed under close arrest. Eventually the situation was resolved, due largely to the intervention and diplomacy of Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, RN, who after carefully considering the charge of mutiny concluded it a 'wash-out'. The pay issues were investigated and resolved after which the admiral addressed the men on the matter of discipline before complimenting them on their excellent work at Suvla Bay.



Allied Troops Being Evacuated from Gallipoli, January 1916



In March 1916 Bond was transferred to the Royal Navy in the Administrative Headquarters at Alexandria; he was posted to the depot ship HMS HANNIBAL for the remainder of the war.

On 22 November 1919 Bond departed from England aboard the SS AENEAS bound for Australia; he arrived in Brisbane on 14 January 1920 – his mother Charlotte had died the previous year. At this time Bond was admitted to the 27th AAH for treatment of a war wound – a gunshot wound to the upper left forearm. He was in hospital until August 1920. He was also medically unfit for service due to Dupuytren's contraction – where the fingers bend towards the palm, unable to be fully extended. Bond's service was finally terminated on 19 October 1920.

For his war service Bond was awarded the 1914/1915 Star, the British War Medal, the Victory medal and two oak leaves for his Distinguished Service Order. In 1922 he also applied for the Volunteer Officers' Decoration.

Bond prior to his death became the longest serving member of the Brisbane Stock exchange having been elected in 1887 and was president in 1903. Bond died in Kangaroo Point, Brisbane on 4 September 1942, survived by his wife Gladys.'

Bond's DSO was the first Australian decoration awarded in WWI and the 1st Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train was the most decorated Australian Naval unit of World War One. During its existence, 28th February 1915 to 27th March 1917, the Train had made two amphibious landings [Gallipoli](#) and [El Arish](#), the first battle of Gaza and lost 25 sailors killed. Lieutenant Commander Bracegirdle was awarded the [Distinguished Service Order](#) and [Mentioned in Despatches](#) three times for his command of the Train, while 16 of his men were also Mentioned in Despatches. Several others went on to distinguish themselves in the AIF and RAN winning a number of bravery awards.

