



Vale Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

By John Perryman

This edition of Semaphore marks the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and serves to highlight the unique relationship Her Majesty had with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Australian Nation throughout her reign.

Queen Elizabeth II ruled for longer than any other monarch in British history, becoming a much loved and respected figure across the globe. Her extraordinary reign saw her travel more widely than any other monarch, undertaking many historic overseas visits.

Her Majesty was no stranger to Australia, visiting our shores to take part in numerous significant commemorations, anniversaries and ceremonies. Known for her sense of duty and her devotion to a life of service, she has been an important figurehead for the UK and the Commonwealth during times of unprecedented social change.

The Queen was born at 2.40am on 21 April 1926 at 17 Bruton Street in Mayfair, London. She was the first child of The Duke and Duchess of York - who later became King George VI - and Queen Elizabeth. She was christened Elizabeth Alexandra Mary at Buckingham Palace on 29 May that year.

Her Royal Highness was expected to live a relatively normal life with her close-knit and loving family. But that changed in December 1936 when her uncle – King Edward VIII - abdicated, leaving her father as King, and Princess Elizabeth as next in line to the throne.

The war years, 1939-1945, took a tremendous toll on King George VI as he encouraged and inspired his subjects through some of Britain's darkest hours. Many believe that the burden of responsibility imposed on him led to his premature death on 6 February 1952 following a prolonged illness.

Princess Elizabeth immediately acceded to the throne, becoming Queen Elizabeth II and taking on all of the responsibilities which came with her new title including that of Queen of Australia.

The new queen's Coronation took place in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953 with prime ministers, leading citizens of Commonwealth countries and representatives of foreign states gathering to mark the occasion and pay their respects. Elsewhere crowds of people lined the procession route in spite of heavy rain. A contingent of Australian Armed Forces personnel was also in attendance most of whom had taken passage to England in the aircraft carrier HMAS *Sydney* (III) as part of an official coronation contingent. In a world first, the coronation ceremony was also broadcast on radio and television around the world.



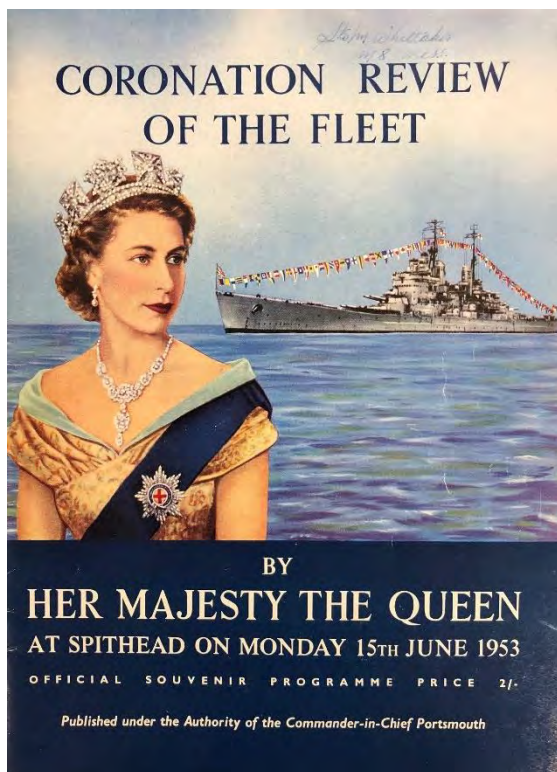
Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh pose for a coronation portrait in June 1953

Following the coronation, a fleet of 300 vessels, comprising Royal Navy, Commonwealth and visiting foreign warships, formed up in 12 columns in the waters of the Solent adjacent to the major ports of Portsmouth and Southampton. The spectacle was reviewed by Her Majesty on Monday 15 June 1953. For those serving in HMAS



Sydney (III) it proved to be a memorable occasion and one of the last great reviews of a bygone era.

In 1954 Her Majesty set out to complete the tour of the Commonwealth she had begun prior to the death of her father. Accompanied by her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, she visited Bermuda, Jamaica, Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon, Uganda, Malta and Gibraltar.



A treasured souvenir program retained by a member of HMAS Sydney (III)'s ship's company who took part in the Coronation Review of June 1953.

Ceremonially conveyed ashore by naval personnel at Farm Cove, Sydney, on 3 February 1954, Her Majesty became the first reigning monarch of Australia to set foot on Australian soil. This proved to be the beginning of a relentless itinerary that included visits to seven capital cities and 70 country towns in just 58 days. Throughout many of those visits Her Majesty was welcomed by Royal Guards of Honour comprising RAN personnel.

The next visit to Australia by Her Majesty took place in February 1963 when she and Prince

Philip arrived in Australia to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Australian capital, Canberra. The tour saw Her Majesty also visit Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Sydney, Brisbane, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in NSW, the Northern Territory and Perth.

Throughout the official tour, the RAN assumed many responsibilities to ensure the Royal couple's safety including sea patrols during Royal overflights and the provision of HMAS *Anzac* (II) as an official escort to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*.



Her Majesty and the Duke at Parliament House in Canberra during the 1954 Royal Tour

Following the arrival of *Britannia* at Sydney's overseas passenger terminal, Circular Quay, a Royal Guard of Honour and RAN band received Her Majesty; an occasion that also marked the first parading of the new Queen's Colour under the watchful eye of Colours Officer Lieutenant D. Daly, RAN. The Navy was also responsible for the handling of secure Royal communications and for the provision of sentries during the visit which concluded on 27 March 1963.

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Queen Elizabeth II's third visit to Australia took place in March/April 1970. On that occasion she was accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Prince Charles and Princess Anne.

Arriving at Mascot Airport, Sydney, on 30 March, Her Majesty was again received by a Naval Royal Guard and Band. The occasion was all the more significant for the RAN as it was the first time that the new Queen's Colour, incorporating the Australian White Ensign adopted in 1967, was paraded in her presence.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II inspecting the Royal Guard and Colour Party paraded for her on arriving at Mascot Airport, Sydney, in March 1970.

The Royal visit marked an important milestone for modern Australia as it coincided with the bicentenary of Captain James Cook's arrival in 1770; a reminder of the part played by naval forces in the discovery, exploration and ongoing defence of our island nation.

Queen Elizabeth II's next visit to Australia took place in October 1973 focussing on the opening of the Sydney Opera House. As the home of the RAN fleet, hundreds of Sydney-based naval personnel were involved in the celebrations, notably the RAN fleet band which featured prominently throughout proceedings taking the opportunity to release and promote a new album entitled *Pacific Horizons*.

http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Navy_News-October-19-1973.pdf

In late 1973 invitations from the governments of New Zealand and Australia were accepted by Her Majesty to visit both countries as part of a tour of the Pacific scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 1974. The visit proved to be a busy time for the RAN with multiple ships performing Royal duties.

HMAS *Anzac* (II) was the first to host a Royal when His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh visited the ship on 9 January 1974 while berthed at Port Lyttelton, New Zealand, mid-way through a training cruise. Later, HMAS *Torrens* (Captain DJ Martin, RAN), performed the duty as the principal RAN escort for HMY *Britannia* for 14 days between 10-24 February as Her Majesty, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Anne, made calls at a number of Commonwealth Pacific island nations.



Members of the RAN Fleet Band pose on the steps of the Sydney Opera House.

RAN patrol boats also played a part when HMA Ships *Aitape* (Lieutenant K Wintle, RAN), *Madang* (Lieutenant D Caton, RAN), *Ladava* (Lieutenant G Smith, RAN) and *Lae* (Lieutenant S Pert, RAN), all of the Papua New Guinea Squadron, welcomed

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the Royals with a 21 gun salute as they entered Kieta Harbour, Rabaul.

At the end of her escort duty *Torrens* received special praise from Her Majesty who conveyed the following message to Captain Martin:

'Thank you for your escort. I was most impressed by the admirable way in which you carried out your duties, the smart appearance of your ship and by your steampast.'



*Her Majesty meeting some crew members of HMAS *Torrens* during the Royal tour of the South Pacific in 1974.*

Several years would elapse before the Queen's next visit to Australia to celebrate her silver jubilee in 1977.

The 1977 jubilee tour saw the Queen and Prince Philip spending most of the month of March touring Australia.

Arriving in Canberra on 7 March, the tour began in spectacular fashion when more than 1600 Service personnel paraded on the lawns in front of Parliament House the following day. The Royal Guard of Honour comprised 300 men from the three Armed Forces and was under the charge of Commander Ralph Derbidge, MBE, RAN. The naval component of the guard was drawn from the RAN Apprentice Training Establishment HMAS *Nirimba* and was ably led by Lieutenant Commander Don McNaught, RAN. The musical accompaniment was provided by a 100 strong massed tri-Service band.

After opening the second session of the 30th Australian Parliament the Queen moved to a dais

where she received a Royal Salute before reviewing the parade, the climax of which saw 56 ADF aircraft fly overhead in two separate formations.

On completion of their visit to Canberra, the Royal party began an extensive tour of Australia which saw them visit each state and territory. Throughout the tour HMAS *Vampire* (II) (Captain AR Horton, RAN) escorted HMY *Britannia* and 8 RAN personnel were fortunate to be selected to serve in *Britannia* as part of her crew. Elsewhere around Australia, naval personnel routinely paraded adding to the pageantry.

Although the visit concluded on 29 March it was not the end of the RAN's involvement in jubilee celebrations. On 28 June HMA Ships *Melbourne* (II) (Commodore RC Swan, RAN) and *Brisbane* (II) (Captain RW Burnett, RAN) represented Australia in the Silver Jubilee Naval Review at Spithead, UK. Hailed as the greatest naval review since the Queen's coronation, it comprised some 175 ships from 18 nations.



*The crew of the RAN's flagship record their participation in Jubilee celebrations on the flight deck of HMAS *Melbourne* (II). The carrier is escorted by HMAS *Brisbane* (II) and HMNZS *Canterbury* en-route to the UK.*

The Queen and Prince Philip visited Australia on five separate occasions during the 1980s.

The first visit, in May 1980, was centred on opening a new High Court building in Canberra and was followed in 1981 with Her Majesty's attendance at a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne. In October 1982 Her Majesty returned to Australia with Prince



Philip to attend the XII Commonwealth Games in Brisbane and officially open the new National Gallery in Canberra. While visiting Darwin, Her Majesty also opened the Navy's new patrol boat base adjacent to Larakeyah Barracks. On each of those occasions the Navy continued to provide ceremonial and practical support to the Royal entourage with HMAS *Torrens* (Captain JG McDermott, RAN) reprising her role as escort ship for HMY *Britannia* as the Queen continued her tour visiting a number of Pacific island dominions.



Her Majesty the Queen dedicates the RAN memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra as part of the 75th Anniversary celebrations.

In March 1986 Her Majesty returned to Australia with Prince Philip to mark the 75th anniversary of the granting of the 'Royal' title to Australia's naval forces. During the visit Her Majesty dedicated a national RAN memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra and later presented the Navy with a new Queen's colour in a ceremony at HMAS *Cerberus*.

During the 1986 Royal tour the duty of escort ship to HMY *Britannia* fell to HMAS *Darwin* (Captain H Donohue, RAN) as the Queen travelled by sea from Port Melbourne to Western Port and then on to Adelaide.

Australia's bicentennial year, 1988, saw the Queen and Prince Philip arrive in Perth in April where they began a three week visit which included the opening of the World Expo in Brisbane, the opening of Darling Harbour in Sydney and the opening of Australia's new Parliament House in Canberra. The Navy again

featured prominently throughout proceedings, providing security and ceremonial support to the Royal entourage and a noticeable presence at the opening of Parliament House on 9 May 1988.

The 1990s saw a sharp decline in visits by Her Majesty to Australia with just one taking place in 1992. On that occasion Her Majesty came to take part in celebrations commemorating the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of Sydney as a city. The second session of the fiftieth parliament of New South Wales was also opened by the Queen on 20 February with a tri-Service guard in attendance led by Lieutenant Commander K Bailey, RAN. The naval component comprised chiefly of apprentices drawn from HMAS *Nirimba*.



Her Majesty the Queen congratulates Able Seaman Justin Brown at Government House, Canberra, following his award of a Commendation for Gallantry, 25 March 2000.

Eight years would elapse before the Queen resumed tours of Australia with the first of them taking place in March 2000, just four months after



a referendum was held concerning whether Australia should become a republic. The result of the referendum revealed ongoing public support for the monarchy and the visit was, no doubt, timed in recognition of that outcome.

Highlights of the visit included the first parading of Australia's Tri-Service Federation Guard before Her Majesty with some 3000 members of the public turning out, in steady rain, to welcome the Royal party. The visit also took place following the conclusion of the highly successful INTERFET operation in East Timor and Her Majesty personally decorated a number of ADF personnel for bravery at Government House, Canberra, who had distinguished themselves while on active service in East Timor. Able Seaman Clearance Diver Justin Brown was one of those recognised through the award of a Commendation for Gallantry.

Her Majesty returned to Australia in February 2002, during her golden jubilee year, to attend the seventeenth Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Coolumb, Queensland, between 2 and 5 March. Regional security was at the top of the agenda following the 11 September attacks on the United States the previous year, as was the Queen's personal security throughout the visit. The five-day programme saw the Queen and Prince Philip spend most of their time in South Australia and Queensland.

In her 80th year Her Majesty returned to Australia to open the XVIII Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in early March 2006. Around 2,600 Australian Defence Force personnel supported Commonwealth and State security operations in connection with the games to ensure their success. At that time many speculated that it may have been Her Majesty's last visit to Australia, however, this prediction proved premature with the Queen and Prince Philip both making one final appearance in 2011.

The 2011 visit was an important one for Australia's naval forces which commemorated 100 years of service as the 'Royal' Australian Navy, the Royal title having been approved for use by King George V in 1911.

The Queen's 16th visit to Australia took place during the period 19-29 October 2011 beginning

in Canberra when the Royal aircraft touched down at Fairbairn air base. There Her Majesty was received by the Australian Federation Guard and a 21 gun Royal salute. The following day the RAN's VIP boat squadron conveyed Her Majesty and Prince Philip across Lake Burley Griffin from Government House to Commonwealth Park. The appearance of an admiral's barge on Canberra's lake, with the Royal couple embarked generated great interest and Her Majesty remarked to its crew on how much she enjoyed the 25 minute journey.



The Royal barge conveys Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Philip across Lake Burley Griffin in October 2011.

The visit also saw Her Majesty and Prince Philip visit Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth before returning to the United Kingdom.

Throughout the reign of Queen Elizabeth II she, and her late husband His Royal Highness Prince Philip, maintained close ties with the Australian nation and its Navy. Generations of Australian naval personnel have served in Her Majesty's Australian Ships and many others have paraded for Her Majesty during her sixteen visits to Australia.

As the Nation enters a period of respectful mourning the Chief of Navy's flag will remain at half-mast until sunset on the day of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral.