

**THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF
AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR
OF 1914-1918**

**VOLUME X
RABAU**

THE
AUSTRALIANS AT RABAU

THE CAPTURE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE
GERMAN POSSESSIONS IN THE
SOUTHERN PACIFIC

BY
S. S. MACKENZIE

With 55 maps and 91 illustrations

Tenth Edition

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PREFACE

THE official records relating to the military occupation of New Guinea form indispensable authority for much that comes within the scope of this volume; but they are often meagre in detail, and many are merely official *communiqués* dealing in bare outline with salient facts or incidents. Events as they happened, and administrative questions or problems as they arose, were mentioned by the Military Administrator in despatches, reports, or memoranda, addressed either to the Minister for Defence or to the Secretary: for the most part these communications are brief and formal, and do not yield to the historian any rich store of picturesque detail. When files relating to New Guinea originated at Defence headquarters in Melbourne, and dealt with matters such as the organising and equipping of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force and of the Tropical Force, and with such questions of policy as involved departmental action, they are full and complete. Despatches of Colonel Holmes concerning the organisation and departure of his force, the voyage of the *Berrima*, the negotiations with the German Governor, and the terms of capitulation, give accurate and detailed information; but his official account of the landing at Kabakaul and of the fighting on the Bitapaka road—incidents of cardinal interest to a narrator of the military occupation of New Guinea—is not, except as an authoritative statement of the general plan of operations, of material assistance.

The only British official record giving precise particulars of the landing and fighting on 11th September, 1914, is contained in a report prepared with great care by Major P. Molloy, R.M.L.I., not long after the capitulation of the German forces. It is based on statements made by officers and men—both Australian and German—who took part in the operations; but it does not altogether clear up some confused issues, nor does it deal with all the phases of the fighting. The author of the present volume has had opportunities of visiting the ground fought over, of investigating points hitherto in doubt or dispute, of collating the official German reports with that of Major Molloy, and his narrative of the

fighting near Kabakaul has been carefully checked and further elaborated by the general editor, with the assistance of several of those who took part in the events. It is therefore hoped that the account of the military operations, concerning which little appears to be generally known in Australia, is neither incomplete nor inaccurate in any material particular. With the exception of Molloy's narrative of the military operations, a report by Major F. A. Maguire on the medical services (which, however, covers only the period from 19th August, 1914, to 9th January, 1915), and a diary kept by Colonel Holmes—in which are recorded the events of each day from the date of his appointment to command until his return to Australia in January, 1915—there is in existence on the Australian side nothing in the nature of a connected narrative, whether of events as they occurred or of the work or activities of any branch of the military administration. The history of the military occupation has therefore been pieced together from a mass of official documents, in which references to administrative questions or problems often appear merely as parts of reports dealing with other subject-matters. Every statement or reference in this volume is based on the official records of the Defence Department, or on German official reports, or on other evidence which the writer has carefully tested, considered, and accepted as authentic. With regard, however, to questions of administrative policy and to many other topics it would have been difficult to fashion the available material into a connected narrative, if the writer had not enjoyed exceptional opportunities for gaining an intimate official knowledge of all branches of the administration. To some extent, therefore, the relative importance of events, and the way in which they are presented, are the outcome of experience gained during a period of service—from April, 1915, to December, 1920—as legal adviser to the Military Administration, as chief judicial officer of the colony, and, for two terms, as Acting-Administrator. Memory, however, is treacherous, and individual judgment far from infallible. The greatest care has accordingly been taken to verify every reference and to confirm from other sources personal recollections or impressions. The official records of the Department of Defence have been very thoroughly searched; those which

supply authority for matters contained in this volume have been closely studied; and it is believed that no file relating to the military occupation has been overlooked.

The writer is indebted for various forms of help to the following:—The Right Honourable Sir Adrian Knox, Chief Justice of Australia; Sir Robert Garran, Solicitor-General for the Commonwealth; His Excellency Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant-Governor of Papua; Messrs T. Trumble, W. A. Newman, H. S. Temby, and T. J. McGrath of the Department of Defence; Mr. J. G. McLaren, Secretary of the Home and Territories Department; Mr. G. S. Knowles, Assistant-Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department; Mr. Arthur Jose, the author of the naval volume of this history; Colonel A. Graham Butler, Medical Historian; Captain J. B. Stevenson; Commanders R. G. Bowen and F. G. Cresswell; Lieutenant-Commanders O. W. Gillam and D. Macdonald; Colonels F. B. Heritage and C. L. Strangman; Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Cummins; Messrs. H. B. Pope, Australian Commissioner for Nauru, A. F. Newman, formerly senior clerk in the Radio Service, and W. Kember; Dr. F. Antill Pockley, and many others. The smaller explanatory maps and plans appearing in the text are the work of Mr. P. R. Wightman; Mr. A. E. Scammell has drawn most of the larger maps. The writer also offers his thanks to Mr. Charles Bryant, and to the Director of the Australian War Memorial, for permission to reproduce in this volume two paintings which faithfully reflect the glow and colour of New Guinea.

The account of the discovery and exploration of the Territory is based on Sir Clement Markham's *Progress of Discovery on the Coasts of New Guinea* (Royal Geographical Society, Supplementary Papers). Reference has also been made to the historical introduction to Quick and Garran's *Annotated Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*; to *The Commonwealth Bank of Australia*, by C. C. Faulkner; to *The New Pacific*, by Brunson Fletcher; to *Our New Possessions*, by Captain J. Lyng; and to the Commonwealth Government's reports to the League of Nations. For the early history of the Protectorate, the writer has consulted standard German works on New Guinea and the German official files.

In the account of the position at Rabaul at the outbreak of the war, and in the narrative of the military operations, the following German official reports have been freely used:— Report on the Military Events in German New Guinea, by the Acting-Governor, Herr E. Haber; Report on the Occurrences in New Britain until the return of the Acting-Governor to Rabaul, by Herr Schlettwein, the deputy of the Acting-Governor; and the Report on the Activities of the armed forces in German New Guinea during the period from 5th August to 21st September, 1914, with two supplementary reports, by Rittmeister von Klewitz.

Some apology may be necessary for introducing the past history of the Protectorate into a record of the military occupation. But the problems of administration could not be clearly understood without such a background. From the same wish to present every event in its proper setting, the writer has thought it necessary to give a brief geographical description of New Guinea, and to this, for the sake of interest, has been added an outline of the discovery and exploration of the various parts of the Territory.

The volume deals with an occasion on which Australian soldiers were called upon to carry on the administration of enemy territory. The writer hopes that he has been able to show that to the fulfilment of this task, and to the solution of the novel problems which they encountered, they brought the same qualities of initiative and resource as were shown, in other circumstances, by their comrades in Gallipoli and France.

S. S. M.

MELBOURNE,

4th February, 1927.

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CHRONOLOGY, 1914-1921

(*Italic type indicates events dealt with in this volume.*)

1914.

- June 28—Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria.
- July 28—Austria declares war on Serbia.
- Aug. 1—Germany declares war on Russia.
2—German troops enter Luxemburg and France.
3—Germany declares war on France.
4—Germany invades and declares war on Belgium; Great Britain declares war on Germany.
5—Austria declares war on Russia.
10—Recruiting for A.I.F. opens.
11—*Enlistment for A.N. & M.E.F. begins.*
12—*H.M.A.S. Sydney and destroyers raid Blanche Bay. H.M.S. Hampshire puts out of action wireless station at Yap.*
19—*A.N. & M.E.F. leaves Sydney.*
23—Japan declares war on Germany. Japanese fleet blockades and bombards Tsingtao.
24—*A.N. & M.E.F. arrives at Palm Islands.*
30—New Zealand force occupies Samoa.
- Sept. 9—*H.M.A.S. "Sydney" puts out of action wireless station at Nauru.*
10—German cruiser *Emden* first raids in the Bay of Bengal.
11—*A.N. & M.E.F. lands on New Britain.*
13—*British flag hoisted at Rabaul.*
17—*Terms of capitulation of German New Guinea signed.*
21—*Surrender of German and native forces at Herbertshöhe.*
22—*Emden* bombards Madras; German cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* shell Papeete.
24—*A.N. & M.E.F. occupies Madang.*
- Oct. 7—Japan occupies Marshall and Caroline Islands.
11—*German naval yacht "Komet" captured by A.N. & M.E.F.*
17—*A.N. & M.E.F. occupies New Ireland.*
- Nov. 1—Battle of Coronel. First contingents of A.I.F. and N.Z.E.F. sail from Albany, Western Australia.
6—*A.N. & M.E.F. occupies Nauru.*
7—Japanese capture Tsingtao.
8—German light cruiser *Geier* interned by United States of America at Honolulu.
9—*Emden* destroyed by H.M.A.S. *Sydney* at Cocos Islands.
19—*A.N. & M.E.F. occupies Admiralty and Western Islands.*
28—*Tropical Force leaves Sydney.*

- Dec. 8—*Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Leipzig* sunk in the Battle of the Falkland Islands.
 9—*A.N. & M.E.F. occupies German Solomon Islands.*
 14—German auxiliary cruiser *Cormoran* interned by United States of America at Guam.
- 1915.
- Jan. 8—*Colonel Pethebridge takes over Administratorship of German New Guinea from Colonel Holmes.*
 9—*A.N. & M.E.F. begins to leave New Guinea; relieved by Tropical Force.*
- Mar. 14—German cruiser *Dresden* sunk by British warships off Juan Fernandez.
- Apr. 8—German auxiliary cruiser *Prinz Eitel Friedrich* interned by United States of America at Newport News.
- 1916.
- Apr. 15—*Branch of Commonwealth Bank of Australia opened at Rabaul.*
- 1917.
- Aug. 2—German raider *Seeadler* wrecked on Mopelia Island.
 6—*Australian passenger steamer "Matunga" captured by German raider "Wolf."*
- 1918.
- Jan. 25—*Death of Sir Samuel Pethebridge.*
 Feb. 24—German auxiliary cruiser *Wolf* returns to Germany.
 Apr. 21—*General Johnston assumes office as Administrator at Rabaul.*
 Nov. 11—Armistice signed with Germany.
- 1919.
- Jan. 18—Peace Conference opens at Versailles.
 June 28—Peace Treaty signed and published.
- 1920.
- May 1—*General Griffiths takes over from General Johnston as Administrator at Rabaul.*
 Sept. 1—Expropriation Ordinance for German New Guinea brought into force.
- 1921.
- Apr. 5—*General Wisdom takes over from General Griffiths.*
 6—*Mandate for New Guinea received by the Commonwealth from League of Nations.*
 May 9—End of military occupation of German New Guinea.



THE LANDING OF THE NAVAL BRIGADE AT KABAKAUL ON THE 11TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1914

From a picture by Charles Boynt Esq. in the Institution II at Memorial collection

Frontispiece