Home Contact Site map Site index

NAVY
Royal Australian Navy

Search Go

ABOUT | ORGANISATION | THE FLEET | NAVY TODAY | JOBS | HISTORY & TRADITIONS | PEOPLE & FAMILY

Home > History > Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force

The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force - First to Fight, 1914

By Mr John Perryman

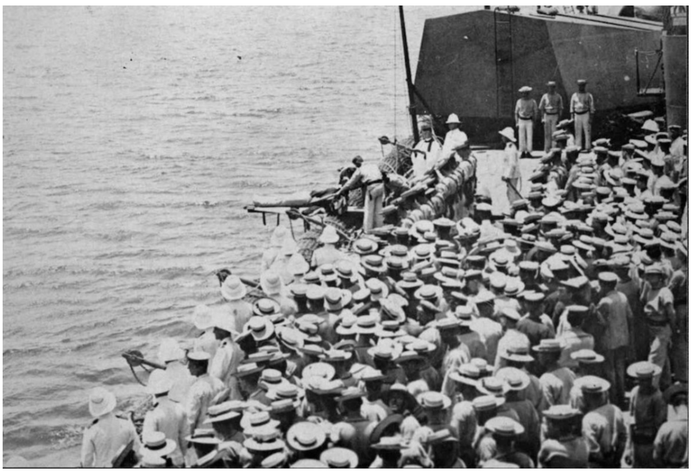
Image by Ian Kershaw

Lest Ryan Lower, after the sinking of the Australian Fleet Unit in Coronel, 1914, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was to undertake a significant and highly creditable amount of service in the First World War. The Navy's efforts were first in the Pacific and then in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Mesopotamia in the Great War, and in the Mediterranean and Adriatic in the Austro-Hungarian Campaign.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914 the Australian Fleet consisted the battlecruiser HMAS Australia, the light cruisers Melbourne, Sydney and Encounter, the small cruiser Pioneer, the Parramatta class destroyers, the submarine AE1 and AE2. The Commonwealth also possessed the coastal defence gunboats and troopship Protector, the cable repair ship Permian, the personnel transport of the RAN Reserve and the training ship Cerberus (HMAS Cerberus). All these ships were manned by Royal Navy personnel.

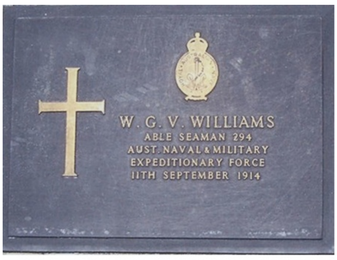
The Fleet Unit, the Pioneer and the Parramatta class destroyers, on war service in Pacific waters, formed the Australian Naval Squadron (ANS) under the command of Rear Admiral Sir George Ernest Patey, who was knighted for his services in the Pacific. Patey had been Officer-in-charge Commander-in-Chief Australia station, the Flagship Cerberus, and was the Commander-in-Chief, Australian Squadron, and was knighted for his services in the Pacific. Patey had been

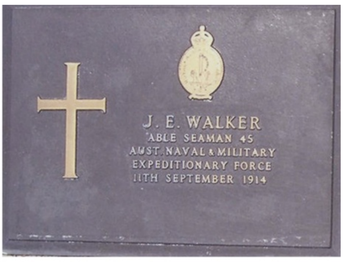
The burial at sea of Signalman RD Moffatt from the main deck of HMAS Australia.



A naval guard salutes the body of Able Seaman Courtney prior to his interment.

The original graves of Captain Pockley (right) and Able Seaman Williams (left). Later the graves of all who fell were relocated to a Commonwealth War Grave established at Bitapaka in 1950.





The markers of four of those who fell, located at the Bitapaka Commonwealth War Cemetery.

On 11 September 1978 four naval veterans who were involved in the 1914 ANMEF operation gathered at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne to commemorate the 64th anniversary of the RAN's first action in World War I. From left, the then Naval Officer in Charge of Victoria, Commodore KW Shands, OBE, RAN; Mr Bill Gothard, 84 of Fairfield, Vic; Mr Arthur 'Digger' Waller, 88 of Yarraville, Vic; Commander Stan Veale, 85 of Elwood, Vic; and Mr Syd Maskell, 88 of Footscray, Vic. Commander Veale, Mr Gothard and Mr Waller were part of the landing party while Mr Maskell served in HMAS Encounter, one of the cruisers involved in the operation.

1. ↑It was subsequently discovered that both were located at Bitapaka - one was the primary station and the other a secondary station.