



THE SILENT ANZAC LEGEND

AUSTRALIAN SUBMARINE HMAS AE2



HMA Submarine AE2 'running amok in the Narrows'
Painting by Phil Belbin courtesy of the RAN

Just before dawn on 25 April 1915, as the first boatloads of ANZAC soldiers were approaching the the Gallipoli Peninsula, the Royal Australian Navy submarine HMAS AE2 came under fire from Turkish shore batteries and dived, having entered the heavily mined waters of the Dardanelles Strait two hours earlier. These were minefields that had already claimed three battleships of the British and French fleets and severely damaged three others.

Her mission was to create a diversion to the landings by 'running amok in the Narrows' and then enter the Turkish inland Sea of Marmara to cut the supply lines of the Ottoman army. Two other Allied submarines had tried and failed the same task, resulting in their destruction.

Despite fierce Turkish opposition and against all odds, AE2 succeeded. History suggests that a characteristically Australian approach, encompassing skill, bravery, fortitude and luck meant she was the first Allied submarine to breach the Straits to pave the way for a number of other Allied submarines, causing great disruption to Turkish reinforcements moving on and around the Sea of Marmara.

Her campaign ended five days later on 30 April 1915. The AE2 was lost, scuttled by her crew after being fatally damaged in an engagement with the Turkish torpedo-boat SULTANHISAR. Her crew of 32 was taken as prisoners of war.



The Crew of HMA Submarine AE2 as POWs in Turkey, 1915
Australian War Memorial Negative Number P00371.001

For more than 80 years, she lay hidden beneath the waters of the Sea of Marmara, undiscovered despite repeated attempts to locate the missing submarine, her story almost unknown except to a few historians. All this changed when, in 1998, after three long years of hard search, Turkish museum director and wreck explorer, Mr. Selcuk Kolay found AE2 sitting intact and upright on the bottom in 73m of water - her final resting place.

The Gallipoli 2007 Campaign

The Australian Government has agreed to support the AE2 Commemorative Foundation Ltd (the Foundation) in conducting a maritime archaeological survey so it can plan to preserve AE2 and tell the story of her brave crew.

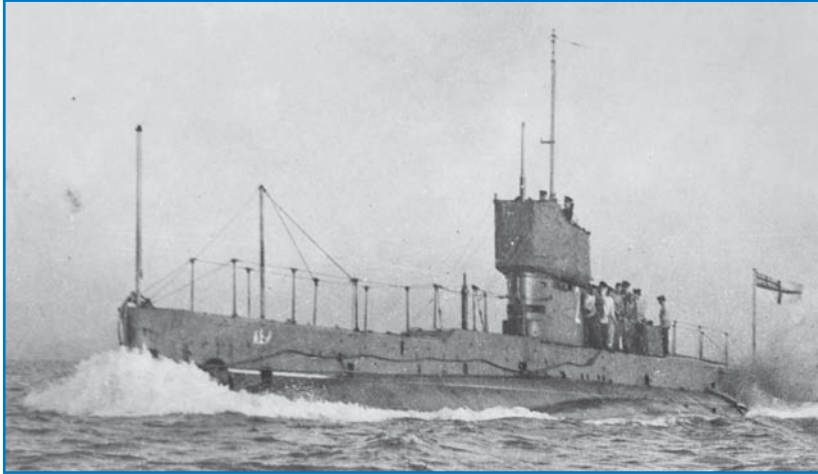
The Foundation, supported by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and sponsors, is preparing to conduct a survey of the submarine in the northern autumn of 2007 using divers and a Remotely Operated Vehicle to ascertain its material state, enabling recommendations to be made to the Turkish and Australian Governments on the way ahead, targeted at the centenary of the landings in 2015.

In February 2007, a Mission Rehearsal training exercise was conducted in the deep waters off the Victorian coast. The 13 divers and 2 film crew had the chance to dive with technical equipment on a scuttled J class submarine in deep water, as well as to discuss details of the mission with the scientists, marine archaeologists and engineers who will be making recommendations as to whether the AE2 is intact enough to attempt to raise her to the surface or if she should be left in her silent resting place.



AE2's bow draped in fishing nets
Courtesy of Dr Mark Spencer

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THIS UNIQUE PROJECT TO PRESERVE ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S FEW REMAINING, AND SIGNIFICANT, WORLD WAR I RELICS AND TO ENSURE THE STORY OF THE EXPLOITS OF HER HEROIC CREW IS TOLD AS PART OF THE ANZAC CENTENARY IN 2015.



HMA Submarine AE2

Australian War Memorial Negative Number 301364

We seek indications of interest from potential partners to support these efforts and participate in implementing the agreed future to preserve AE2 and recognise Australia's silent heroes of Gallipoli. The Foundation estimates that this project will cost in excess of \$A6m over the next 10 years and has established the AE2 Commemorative Foundation for which Tax Deductibility is being sought.

In the first instance, potential sponsors (either financial or in kind) should contact the AE2 Commemorative Foundation Ltd:



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