

FINDING THE LOST SUBMARINE: THE MYSTERY OF AE1

by

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... Wrapped in the ocean boundless
Where the tides are scarcely stirred
In deeps that are still and boundless,
They perished unseen, unheard ...

From 'Missing' by Will Lawson, 1914

The oldest mystery of Australian naval history revolves around the fate of submarine *AE1*. Together with *AE2* she was the first submarine to be purchased by the fledgling Commonwealth government and undertook a record-making voyage to Australia in 1914. After arranging to return to port at Kokopo (then Herbertshohe) in New Britain on September 14, *AE1*'s thirty-five officers and crew sailed into a sea mist and were never seen again. Since then there have been many speculations about her fate and a number of attempts to locate the wreckage. Forgotten though *AE1* was in the ensuing events of the war, her brief life and the unexplained circumstances of her loss made an extraordinary impact on the Australian public and still have the power to move us today.

In December 1910 an Australian nation less than one-decade old, ordered two submarines from the Vickers Maxim shipyards at Barrow-in-Furness. These were to be boats of the British E class, their national designation heralded in the prefix 'A'. There had been a strong debate in Australian and British defence circles about the value of submarines and even a report recommending against their use. But after representing Australia at the 1907 Colonial Conference in London, Prime Minister Deakin became

convinced of their value and ignored the negative advice. The Commonwealth government paid just over £105,000 for each boat, taking delivery from the builders in Barrow-in-Furness in January 1914. Six weeks later *AE1* and *AE2* were commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy, their 35-man crews having joined the boats early the same month.ⁱ

The E class submarines had been developed from earlier British designs, themselves based on the American Holland boats of the 1890s. After much technical and engineering experimentation, trial and error and some notable disasters, the submarine was just beginning to become a serviceable weapon of war, even though few people had any idea how they might best be deployed. The general seaworthiness and observational values of the two periscopes carried by the E class submarines, together with the navigational bridge built over the conning tower made them ideal for patrol and reconnaissance work, the role in which *AE1* was engaged when she disappeared.

At 178 feet and 1 inch (just over 54 meters), E boats were lengthier than most of their predecessors. They were also heavier but faster, able to achieve speeds of 15 knots on the surface and 9 knots dived. Their propulsion depended on two six-cylinder diesels and two electric motors. They were armed with four torpedo tubes, one at the bow, one at the stern and two on the beam, providing the facility to fire at right angles as well as from the bow and sternⁱⁱ. Later E boats were fitted with deck guns, but *AE1* and *AE2* had none. For the first time ever, these submarines were also fitted with gyroscopes and primitive Marconi wireless equipment, the aerial mounted on a wooden frame that was folded down when diving.

The inside of these narrow machines was only 22 feet and 6 inches wide and crammed with pipes, levers and torpedos. Officers and crews necessarily lived in close quarters in the cramped conditions, reading, playing cards and, on *AE1*, occasionally making music on a couple of concertinasⁱⁱⁱ. Even with the necessary no smoking rule, the limited air quickly became polluted while underwater.

In these circumstances, leadership and morale were therefore even more important considerations than usual and the commanding officers and crews were carefully chosen. English-born Lieutenant Thomas Fleming Besant, RN, became the commander of *AE1* and Irishman Lieutenant Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre Stoker, RN, commanded *AE2*. Their crews were Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy men, the senior sailors in particular selected for their underwater experience through a rigorous training regime and need for high physical attributes.

Besant had joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman in 1898 at the age of fifteen. He saw action in China during the Boxer Rebellion and later became deeply interested in the development of submarines.^{iv} A Freemason, he was interested in horses, fishing and golf. He was redundantly described by the newspapers in Sydney as ‘a clean-shaven young officer of youthful appearance’. If his other utterances were accurately reported, he was also an enthusiastic spokesman for the submariner’s occupation:

‘... it’s not all beer and skittles and perhaps it is a harder life than in other branches of the service but it’s the life I’ve chosen. Oh, yes, it’s dangerous if you want to look at it like that but it’s got to be done – and

every man in the Navy, no matter in what branch he is in, has to be prepared to meet danger when it comes.’^v

Besant was very young to be made Commander of the Australian Submarine Squadron but had a reputation as a capable and cautious officer, suggesting he would have taken no unnecessary risks with his command. Like his First Lieutenant The Honourable Leopold Scarlett and ‘Third Hand’ Lieutenant Charles L Moore, Besant was a single man.

The sister submarines began their pioneering voyage from England to Australia on the morning of March 7, 1914, escorted by HMS *Eclipse*. They were still largely top-secret experimental craft, with the need for constant attention to defects and non-performing machinery. *AE1* had been subjected to balancing tests before leaving England, the results of which suggested that there may have been problems.^{vi} *AE2* had many mishaps. Only three days from Portsmouth a blade fell off her port propeller and the starboard propeller suffered the same problem three weeks later. Even the spare propeller was found to be faulty, with a large crack appearing, it was mostly thought, from poor manufacturing techniques^{vii}. Officers and crew dealt with these problems with stoic inventiveness: ‘Through a long list of mechanical difficulties and mishaps overcome by hook and crook, the miles were pushed astern, the weariness of it but lightly relieved by a few days in ports of call...’ wrote Stoker Charles Suckling in his diary.^{viii} These incidents caused a great deal of practical difficulty, much paperwork and considerable repairing when the submarines reached Gibraltar late on March 6.

They sailed for Malta on March 9. *AE1* broke down during the voyage and had to be towed due to one of many malfunctions of the exhaust and

intake valve springs, engine clutches, toggle bolts and overheating of the motor shaft and bearings that plagued the vessel. Three days later both submarines left Malta for a rough passage to Port Said. As the small convoy passed through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, temperatures inside the submarines sometimes reached 100 degrees Fahrenheit (almost 38 degrees Celsius). *AE1* was painted white in an effort to reduce the heat. After an improvised but effective refitting of *AE2*'s starboard propeller in Aden, the ships made a good passage to Colombo where *Eclipse* was relieved by HMS *Yarmouth*. Partly under tow, *AE1* and *AE2* sailed to Singapore, meeting with their Australian escort HMAS *Sydney* on April 21. Conditions had improved little for the crew, as Engine Room Artificer John Marsland, later lost in *AE1*, wrote in his diary of the voyage: 'The heat in the submarine is now almost unbearable.'^{ix}

Unfortunately, *Sydney* had been ill prepared to host the novelty of submarines and there was no shipboard accommodation for the submarine crews while in port, the men having to remain aboard their cramped and torrid craft. To make matters worse, *Sydney* coaled with poor quality fuel, her cinders and sparks blowing back onto the submarines under tow, causing discomfort and navigational difficulties. On April 25 they left for Djakarta (then still called Batavia). Here they were entertained by the Dutch authorities until their departure for Darwin on April 28.

While travelling through the treacherous Lombok Strait *Sydney* and the submarines almost collided while *AE2* was under tow, due to a parted towrope hampering *Sydney*'s steering. Disaster was narrowly averted through astute seamanship aboard the submarines and they arrived safely at Darwin on May 5. After two days that included 'a very large number

taking advantage of the opportunity of landing on Australian soil for the first time'^x they left for Cairns where they spent five days, heading for Sydney on May 18. Following delays caused by bad weather and 'angry waves', as Marsland described them, *AE1* and *AE2* sailed through Sydney Heads at 6 in the morning of Empire Day - May 24 - docking at Garden Island. The two vessels had accomplished the longest submarine voyage ever undertaken. Even though under tow for around a third of the distance, they and their crews had covered 13 000 miles (almost 21 000 kilometres), 'a significant feat of seamanship and engineering'^{xi}, even acknowledged by the mighty London *Times*. Marsland wrote in his diary with a justifiable note of satisfaction that they had 'completed a most wonderful journey of endurance, both for men and engines.'^{xii}

Although the arrival of *AE1* and *AE2* in Sydney had been muted due to their delay and the fact that most residents were celebrating Empire Day, it was not long before the press and public became fascinated by these bizarre machines of the deep. No one was allowed aboard, as the submarines were still top-secret weapons. This simply made people inquisitive and the crowds came and stared anyway, their interest stimulated by the press reports, which played on the secretive aspects of the craft, as well as their unusual appearance and operation, with phrases and sub-headings such as 'strange looking craft and 'the Home of Secrets'^{xiii}. Jules Verne's famous fantasy, *20 000 Leagues Under the Sea* had only appeared in English for the first time in 1873, so the concept of living and travelling in a self-contained capsule beneath the sea was still the stuff of science fiction for the general public.

As senior officer, Lieutenant Commander Besant was interviewed by the newspapers and seems to have become something of a minor media celebrity. Reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote:

The submarines stood barely five feet above the waterline (save for the bridge and conning tower, rising some ten feet higher), and only a naval officer who has made a submarine his home and loves every bit of her, would contend that she's a lady, like 'the liner'. There are such men. You have only to talk to Lieutenant-Commander Besant, who has charge of *AE1*, for a few moments, and you discover it. It is nine years since he joined the submarine service, and he has lived a fair proportion of that time under water.^{xiv}

The citizens of Sydney were greatly impressed by the arrival of these intriguing new craft in their harbour and provided their officers with a civic reception. There was patriotic applause when Besant stated that 30 of the submariners of *AE1* and *AE2* were Australian and that the submarines were important elements of Australia's naval defences. Officers and crew then enjoyed their first extended periods of shore leave, including beaches, clubs, sporting events and general socialising. Stoker, who liked to present himself as a 'philanderer', moved in more exalted social circles than did the submarine crews, or even Besant. He provides a vignette of the experience in his autobiography, *Straws in the Wind*, declaring Sydney 'the most attractive city to live in I have ever seen.'^{xv}

Two months later, *AE1* and *AE2* were still being refitted from their record-breaking journey when war between Britain and Germany was

declared on August 5 1914. Australian ships were tasked to attack the German Pacific Fleet. The repaired submarines, with their parent ship *Upolo*, joined an Australian flotilla near Rabaul, New Britain (then the main island of what was German New Guinea) as part of the hunt for the enemy ships. On September 14 *AE1* and *Parramatta* were patrolling together near Cape Gazelle. The ship and submarine – called a ‘devil fish’ by the indigenous Wirian people - were exchanging visual signals until shortly before *AE1* was last seen just before 3.30pm.^{xvi} *Parramatta* returned to *AE1*’s last known position but did not sight the submarine. Assuming that *AE1* was returning to harbour as planned, *Parramatta* made for Herbertshohe, anchoring at 7pm.

An hour later *AE1* had still not returned and Australian Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Patey ordered a search for the missing submarine.

Encounter, *Parramatta*, *Warrego* and *Yarra* spent the next two days combing the area. *Yarra* damaged her propellers on a shoal in the poorly charted waters west of the primary Duke of York Island, further reducing the effectiveness of Patey’s squadron. *AE1* was not found, nor was any wreckage and it was determined to convene a Board of Inquiry. This was never held. Instead Lieutenant Stoker of *AE2* was asked for his expert opinions as to what might have happened. His speculations were contained in a report he made from Suva a month later. The possibility of enemy attack was dismissed, as was a breakdown leading to her being swept away. Stoker considered that the most likely causes of her disappearance were that she had either suffered a catastrophic mechanical failure while dived or had been wrecked on one of the many treacherous reefs in the area. In the absence of any further solid evidence, the speculations began and have continued ever since^{xvii}.

In his diary, Wheat recorded that ‘The cause of her disappearance is still a mystery’ and also speculated along the same lines as Stoker’s official report. Wheat, and probably his fellow crewmen, thought that *AE1* might have been sunk by an old tug armed with a five-barrelled Nordenfeldt gun. When the burnt-out and beached wreckage of this vessel was discovered it was thought that she might have surprised *AE1*, which had no deck gun. The possibility of a mine was discounted due to diligent sweeping of the area. Wheat included the suggestion that *AE1* may have overtrimmed due to having one of her motors disabled - ‘that is had not buoyancy enough with her one remaining motor to give complete control and finally she had become unmanageable and sank.’^{xviii} Given the troubled trimming procedures of *AE1* in England and *AE2*’s later stability problems in the Dardanelles, this is perhaps the most likely explanation for the loss of Australia’s first submarine.

The failure of the search to reveal anything of *AE1*’s fate hit the officers and men of *AE2* especially hard. Wheat wrote that it ‘cast a great gloom over us as we all had friends who had gone and we were the only two submarines in Southern Waters ‘ (original caps).^{xix} The Dedication that prefaces his diary reads, in part:

‘To the memory of our sister ship *AE1*, and her crew, Lost September 14th, 1914 in St. Georges Channel, between German New Guinea and New Ireland.

We took the first patrol on the 13th, they took the second next day. We came back, they didn’t. The path of our duty became the high-way of mystery for they never came back. They lie confined in the deep, keeping their silent watch at Australia’s North Passage, heroes all.’^{xx}

Similar speculations appeared in the Australian press. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published a not very accurate account from a ‘special correspondent’ in Rabaul

The tragedy of the AE1 is the first loss that the Australian Navy has sustained, and the magnitude seems all the grimmer for the atmosphere of mystery which surrounds it.

On the afternoon of 15th September the submarine was sighted off Gazelle Point, south of Herbertshohe, heading in the direction of Rabaul. She was never seen again.

A strange patch of oil floating on the quiet surface of the water, a nameless schooner, with a gun mounting from which the gun was missing, discovered on the coast in flames and sinking - these are the only clues we possess to the manner in which the AE1 came to her end, and they are by no means conclusive.

Whether she was actually sunk by a shot from the enemy, whether an unseen pinnacle of coral ripped open her plates, or the pumps refused to do their work in bringing the vessel again to the surface after a dive, will probably remain forever unknown.^{xxi}

Other press reports reveal the impact that the loss of *AE1* produced. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of September 21 contained a lengthy account, together with the official statement on the incident and the Minister’s Tribute. The Prime Minister’s sympathies were extended and there were sections on the crew and officers, including Artificer Lowe and Commander (as he was styled) Besant. The section of the report detailing

the history of the ill-fated submarine once again focussed on her top-secret nature.^{xxii}

Far away in Western Australia the loss was hardly less muted. *The Western Mail* carried a photograph of *AEI* titled ‘The Lost Australian Submarine’^{xxiii} and reprinted the expressions of sympathy and condolence from near and far, including those from New Zealand and from the Commanders in Chief of the East Indies and China. Also included was the official statement from the Navy Board, noting that ‘... although our men did not fall by the hand of the enemy, they fell on active service, and in defence of their Empire, and their names will be enshrined with those of heroes.’^{xxiv}

As well as a strong popular reaction to Australia’s first casualties of the war, there was considerable dismay in official circles. *AEI* and her sister submarine had arrived in Sydney to some fanfare in the press and a great deal of community interest. Not only were they the country’s first submarines, they were also tantalisingly top secret and, at the time, novel fighting machines. *AEI*’s disappearance caused an outpouring of public grief and commemorative activity. There were messages of sympathy from the King and Queen and from Winston Churchill in his role of First Lord of the Admiralty. The Royal Australian Navy produced a black-edged memorial booklet and special payments and arrangements were made for the wives and families of the officers and crew.^{xxv}

It was a pre-radio and television age in which poetry was still an important form of public as well as private expression. A number of poems were composed in commemoration of the tragedy. Will Lawson

(no relation to Henry Lawson) penned one simply titled 'Missing',
published in the Victorian Education Department's *The School Paper*:

They heard no clamour of battle,
No charging squadron's cheers;
No murderous Maxim's rattle
Was dinned in their dying ears;
For wrapped in the ocean boundless
Where the tides are scarcely stirred
In deeps that are still and soundless,
They perished unseen, unheard.
O! brave are the heroes, dying
'Mid thunder of the charge and gun;
But our half-mast flags are flying
For the crew of the AE1.

Lean hull through the light waves leaping
Afar o'er the seas she sped'
Patrolling the long swells sweeping
With the sunlit clouds o'erhead.
One touch of the hand that steered her,
She answered swift to her helm;
Yet the scattered spray that cleaned her
Could smother her and o'erwhelm.
And, into the depths that bind her,
She plunged with a swirling run.
We may seek, but we shall not find her,
Or the crew of the AE1.

The cruisers were dimly creeping
Like ghosts 'neath a dawnlit sky,
Seeking, searching and sweeping;
But the deeps made no reply,
Hour after hour they waited
For the lift of a conning tower,
And a periscope that vibrated
To her engines eager power,
Or gleam of a white wake hissing
In the rose of the rising sun.
They have posted them sadly 'Missing' –
The crew of the AE1.

When Australia's brave sea story
Is written and told, we know
Their names will be lit with glory;
And, wherever the six stars go,
Wherever, with bugles blowing
Australian flag shall wave,
It will tell of a dark tide flowing
O'er a lonely ocean grave.
And the sound of women weeping
For husband, lover and son,
Shall stir them not in their sleeping –
The crew of the AE1.^{xxvi}

Another poem on a similar theme, titled 'To the Men of AE1 Entombed
But Not Forgotten' by Del M'Cay appeared in the *Sydney Sun*.^{xxvii}

She faced no battle flame, she heard no German gun,
The ship without a name, the luckless AE-1.
Yet were her sailor's lives no less for Empire lost,
And mothers, sweethearts, wives must pay the bitter cost.
Australia's warships sweep the broad Pacific main,
But one from out the deep will never rise again.
Yet we shall not forget, through all the years that run,
The fate that she has met - Goodbye to AE-1.

Pent in their iron cell, they sank beneath the wave,
Untouched by shot or shell, they drifted to the grave.
Until their painful breath at last began to fail;
Upon their way to death let pity draw the veil.
They could not strike one blow, but out of sound and sight
Of comrade or of foe they passed to endless night;
Deep down on Ocean's floor, far from the wind and sun,
They rest for evermore - Goodbye to AE-1

A harder fate was their's than men's who fight and die,
But still Australia cares, and will not pass them by;
When Honour's lists are read, their names will surely be
Among the gallant dead who fought to keep us free.
Their winding-sheet is steel, their sepulchre is wide;
Their's is a Monument of History, begun
When down to death they went - Goodbye to AE-1.

These expressions of grief and remembrance echoed the public shock at the loss of *AE1*, along with the concern in official circles. But the fate of the submarine and her crew would soon be forgotten by most as the even greater tragedies of the war unfolded. The lost submarine quickly faded

from the pages of the newspapers and *AE1*'s sister submarine sailed to the Mediterranean. *AE2* became the first to 'force the Dardanelles', penetrating the Narrows section of the Dardanelles and entering the Sea of Marmara. Here she engaged Turkish warships and was eventually scuttled after being forced to surface due to unexplained trimming problems. Her officers and crew spent the rest of the war as prisoners of the Turks, four of them never to emerge from captivity. *AE2* first engaged the enemy at the same moment as the original Anzacs were landing at what has since become known as Gallipoli on the other western side of the Dardanelles peninsula. The Gallipoli campaign was a failure, but culminated in a triumphant withdrawal in December, 1915. The following year the horrors of trench warfare were taken to their worst level on the Somme and in subsequent actions involving Australian troops. In the mounting body count of World War 1, the relatively minor disaster of *AE1* in a colonial sideshow to the main theatres of war was quickly forgotten by the public and by the government.

But not by the families and friends of the men of *AE1* nor by the Royal Australian Navy. In 1968, at the instigation of the then commander of the Australian Submarine Squadron, Commander W L 'Bill' Owen, RAN, a memorial plaque to the crew of *AE1* was presented to the War Graves Commission and located in Bitia Paka War Cemetery, near Rabaul. This, together with a stained glass window commemorating *AE1* and *AE2* in HMAS Watson's Naval Memorial Chapel, is the only tangible acknowledgement in the southern hemisphere of the sacrifice made by the men of *AE1*.^{xxviii} Unfortunately, the plaque was evidently prepared in haste, or perhaps from inaccurate information as it contains at least four and possibly more errors, including misspelling the surnames of crewmen Smail, Marsland and Hodgkin^{xxix}.

A few years later John Foster, a RAN Commander, now retired, began a serious search for the lost submarine. Working in Papua New Guinea as a naval officer in the 1970s, Foster first heard that a local crayfish diver thought that he had seen a submarine on the sea floor. He obtained the official RAN files on *AEI* and was astounded to find that most of them had not been opened since 1919, and then only to make administrative corrections.^{xxx} He managed to convince the Navy to allow him to make a side-scan sonar search from HMAS *Flinders* in 1976. A promising contact was made but was unable to be investigated. Subsequent publicity about the search resulted in a number of descendants of *AEI*'s crew contacting Foster and continuing to play a role in his quest.

In 1990 the famous undersea explorer, Jacques Cousteau conducted another search for *AEI*. Once again, this provided a tantalising contact but nothing conclusive was found due to faulty equipment. Foster was not able to put another search expedition together until 2002. Having been firmly rejected by the Australian Government, he sought financial support from a documentary film company. Following up information gleaned from local divers, Foster and a party investigated a likely site near Milia Mission Rabaul. Unfortunately, sharks prevented a thorough survey of another promising feature. The following year, Foster tried once more but was again frustrated.

He and the documentary makers then managed to convince the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to fund an investigation of the most likely area for finding *AEI*. This expedition included marine archaeologist Jeremy Green of the Western Australian Maritime Museum whose experience with the high technology of modern wreck searches was invaluable. But

yet again, the hopes of Foster and his collaborators were dashed as this expedition failed to locate the submarine.

Foster held further consultation with the Wirian people, which included his being initiated as an honorary clan member. The Wirian told him that they thought he was looking in the wrong place. Oral tradition and the experience of local fishermen dragging the weights on their nets across a metal object on the bottom suggested that there was a wreck a little outside the area that Foster and his expeditions had already searched. Foster provided a GPS position in deeper waters off Mioko Island that he felt should be the datum for a further search which, as recommended by Jeremy Green, should be initially conducted by an aircraft fitted with a Magnetic Anomaly Detector, followed by an ROV or diver investigation.^{xxxii} It was felt that an extended sonar and magnetometer search might also be fruitful.

In February 2007 HMAS *Benalla*, with Foster aboard, made a likely sonar identification of *AEI*'s last resting place. A man-made object of approximately the right size and shape was discovered at 65 metres in an undisclosed location.^{xxxiii} There was a flurry of renewed interest in *AEI* as newspapers and magazines around the world, as well as the Internet, reported the event. Foster and the Royal Australian Navy are confident that they have found a man-made object at a depth and location that fits with the known facts of *AEI*'s disappearance. But final confirmation that the feature is the lost submarine requires further investigation of the site, with a remotely operated submersible to photograph the object.

Until private or government sponsorship can be found to follow up the determined work of John Foster and his various collaborators, the fate of

Australia's lost submarine and her crew will remain a mystery. But the impact that *AE1* had on the general public so long ago seems likely to be repeated whenever her remains are finally found.

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APPENDIX 1 - Technical specifications of E class submarines

Type: E Class Submarine

Displacement: 660 tons (surfaced), 800 tons (submerged)

Length: 181 feet

Beam: 22 feet 6 inches

Draught: 12 feet 6 inches

Builder: Vickers Ltd, Barrow-in-Furness, England

Laid Down: 14 November 1911

Launched: 22 May 1913

Machinery:

2 sets of 8 cylinder diesel engines, battery driven electric motors

Horsepower: 1,750 (surfaced), 550 (submerged)

Speed: 15 knots (surfaced), 10 knots (submerged)

Armament: 4 x 18-inch torpedo tubes

Complement: 35

APPENDIX 2 - The Crew of AE1

The pioneer submariners of this period were drawn from Australian and British backgrounds – and, in once case, New Zealand. Many had been in the Royal Navy, transferring to, or on loan to, the Royal Australian Navy when joining the submarine crews. Others were Royal Australian Navy men. The exact proportion of British to Australian crew is unclear from official documents. According to the Director of Navy Accounts writing to the Director of the Australian War Memorial, of the 35 ill-fated crew of *AE1*, ten were born in Australia, one in New Zealand and the remainder in England, Ireland or Scotland.^{xxxiii} Other lists claim up to 14 were Australian-born. Besant was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* to have claimed that there were 30 Australian submariners among his men.

The confusion seems to have come about because some crew were British-born but serving in the Royal Australian Navy, see documents in Australian Archives (AAV - MP 472, DoN, cf, asns, 1911 - 1921, file number 16/14/4771, docket number 13/11747, 21.11.13).^{xxxiv} At this period, most Australians considered themselves essentially members of the British Empire. The ‘crimson thread of kinship’, as Henry Parkes colourfully described the links between Britain and Australia in his 1890 speech in support of federation, were at least as important as nationality; for many they were even more important. However, while nationality was then, as now, an emotive issue, it was not an issue in the designation of *AE1* as an ‘Australian’ warship, even though some doubt was apparently expressed, presumably by the British, in the late 1920s.

CREW

Following are the ranks, names, places of birth and designations of the officers and crew of *AE1*:

Lieutenant-Commander Thomas Fleming BESANT England Royal Navy

Lieutenant Charles Lewis MOORE Ireland Royal Navy

Lieutenant The Honourable Leopold Florence SCARLETT England
Royal Navy

Petty Officer Robert SMAIL Scotland Royal Australian Navy

Petty Officer Henry HODGE England Royal Navy (ex RN)

Petty officer William TRIBE England Royal Navy
Petty Officer Thomas Martin GUILBERT England Royal Navy
CERA1 Thomas Frederick LOWE England Royal Navy
CERA1 James Alexander FETTES New South Wales Royal Australian
Navy
CERA2 John Albert MARSLAND England Royal Navy
CERA Joseph William WILSON England Royal Australian Navy
ERA3 John MESSENGER Victoria Royal Australian Navy
Leading Seaman Gordon COURBOLD New South Wales Royal
Australian Navy
Able Seaman John REARDON New Zealand Royal Australian Navy
Able Seaman Jack JARMAN Victoria Royal Australian Navy
Able Seaman Frederick William WOODLAND England Royal
Australian Navy (ex RN)
Able Seaman James Benjamin THOMAS England Royal Australian
Navy (Ex-RN)
Able Seaman Frederick George DENNIS England Royal Australian Navy
(ex RN)
Able Seaman George HODGKEN (should be HODGKIN, see Roll of
Honour, Lenham (Kent) War Memorial at <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Kent/Lenham.html>, accessed April 2007) England Royal
Navy
Able Seaman Arthur FISHER England Royal Australian Navy (Ex-RN)
Signalman George DANCE England Royal Australian Navy (ex RN)
Telegraphist Cyril Lefroy BAKER Tasmania Royal Australian Navy
Chief Stoker Harry STRETCH England Royal Navy
A/Leading Stoker Sydney Charles BARTON England Royal Australian
Navy
A/Leading Stoker John William MEEK England Royal Navy

Leading Stoker William Elliott GUY England Royal Navy
Stoker Petty Officer John Joseph MOLONEY (Spelt Maloney by White
and Foster) Queensland Royal Australian Navy
Stoker Petty Officer Charles Frederick WRIGHT England Royal
Australian Navy (ex RN)
Stoker Petty Officer William WADDILOVE Victoria Royal Australian
Navy
Stoker Percy WILSON New South Wales Royal Australian Navy
Stoker John James (Jack) BRAY Victoria Royal Australian Navy
Stoker Ernest Fleming BLAKE Queensland Royal Australian Navy
Stoker Richard Bains HOLT England Royal Navy
Stoker James GUILD Scotland Royal Navy
Stoker Henry Joseph GOUGH England Royal Australian Navy (ex RN)

SOURCES: Director of Navy Accounts to Director Australian War
Memorial, Feb 22 1927, (6411), AA: MP 124/6 File No. 507/201/237
Defence (Navy) Series 1923-1938; White, pp. 225-226; Foster, pp. 105-
112

ⁱ Six extra crew were taken aboard each submarine to allow four instead of three watches, White, M., *Australian Submarines: A History*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 16.

ⁱⁱ See Appendix 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ A possibly trying experience for other crew members, information from *Daily Telegraph* interview with Besant quoted in Brenchley, p. 22.

^{iv} Besant family history, quoted by Peter Richardson at http://www.aelsubmarine.com/authors_notes.html, accessed March 2007.

^v *Sydney Morning Herald* September 21, 1914, p. 8.

^{vi} See research notes on *AEI*'s trimming and inclining experiments in December 1913, prepared by Peter Smith and drawn from Submarine Sketch Book No 4 by Mitchell, O J., Shipdraughtsman, Submarine Design Office, Admiralty, London, dated to 1918, Submarine Historical Collection, Spectacle Island. These tests showed problems with the 'Y' internal main ballast that may or may not have been subsequently corrected.

^{vii} See Eken, J., ‘Technical Detail of the E Class Submarine’, Appendix 1 of White, p. 222.

^{viii} Suckling, C., Diary, p. 4 AWM 3DRL6226.

^{ix} Marsland, J., Diary, extracts reproduced in *Naval Historical Review*, December 1974. Marsland was on board *AE2* at this time, though was later lost with the *AE1*.

^x Marsland Diary

^{xi} White, p. 25

^{xii} Marsland diary quoted in *Naval Historical Review*, December 1974, p. 59.

^{xiii} *Sydney Morning Herald* May 25, 1914, p. 8.

^{xiv} *Sydney Morning Herald* May 25, 1914, p. 8.

^{xv} Stoker, H., *Straws in the Wind*, Herbert Jenkins, London, 1925, p. 60.

^{xvi} There were suggestions of poor communication between ship and submarine due to strained personal and professional relationships and rivalries between the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy, see copy of personal letter from Engineer-Lieutenant Alec B Doyle written aboard *Parramatta* on Sept 17, 1914 at http://www.ae1submarine.com/authors_notes.html, accessed March 2007.

^{xvii} See White, pp. 34ff and, chpts 8 and 9 and Foster, J., *AE1: Entombed But Not Forgotten*, Australian Military History Publications, Loftus, 2006, chpts 8 and 9. Peter Smith, Honorary Curator of the Spectacle Island Submarine Archives points out, *AE2* was carrying several more engine room crew than usually required at the time of her disappearance, suggesting some serious problems in this area. Personal communication January 2007. Even Stoker was still undecided about the fate of *AE1* when he published his autobiography, *Straws in The Wind*, a decade later, pp. 64-67.

^{xviii} Wheat, J., typescript Diary AWM PRM F0026+3DRL/2965, p. 5.

^{xix} Wheat p. 5

^{xx} Wheat, Dedication.

^{xxi} *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 27, 1914.

^{xxii} *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 21, 1914, p. 8.

^{xxiii} *Western Mail* September 25, 1914, p. 28.

^{xxiv} *Western Mail*, September 25, 1914, p. 45.

^{xxv} Australian Archives MP472/1, 3/14/8389, 1914-1914.

^{xxvi} *The School Paper*, No 181, Nov. 2, 1914.

^{xxvii} *Sydney Sun* Sept 23, 1914. Also found in diary in possession of H. Willis, 54 Denman Avenue, Lakemba, NSW, Australia with transcription by Peter Richardson at http://www.ae1submarine.com/authors_notes.html, accessed March 2007.

^{xxviii} It seems not to be widely-known that they are also commemorated in the Royal Naval Memorial at Portsmouth, dedicated to all those World War 1 and 2 sailors who rest in unknown graves beneath the waters of the world.

^{xxix} J A Marsland appears as ‘Mareland’, R Smail appears as ‘Snail’, J J Maloney appears as ‘J F’, (his surname may also be misspelled, see Director of Navy Accounts to Director Australian War Memorial, Feb 22 1927, (6411), AA: MP 124/6 File No. 507/201/237 Defence (Navy) Series 1923-1938) and G Hodgkin appears as ‘Hodgskin’, though it appears that there may have been an attempt to remedy this. These observations have been made from photographs of the plaque and there may be other discrepancies. A thorough check of the relevant primary source records may ascertain the correct details. See also mention of repair work to the memorial in DVA—Annual Reports 2003-2004 — Annual Report of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs Output 3. War Graves at http://www.dva.gov.au/media/aboutus/annrep04/ar_dva/outcomes/outcome03_02.htm

^{xxx} Foster, p. 52. Peter Richardson, brought up in Rabaul, also made efforts to locate *AE1* in the 1990s, but was hampered by volcanic activity in the area. Peter Richardson at http://www.ae1submarine.com/authors_notes.html, accessed March 2007.

^{xxxi} See Green, J., *The search for the AE1: magnetometer and side scan sonar survey Duke of York Islands, East New Britain, 22–28 November 2003*, Report No. 174 Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, 2003.

^{xxxii} Report by J Foster to Commodore RJ Griggs RAN Deputy Fleet Commander Maritime Headquarters, March 8, 2007. See also ABC TV ‘Foreign Correspondent’ segment ‘The Hunt for the AE1’ March 27, 2007.

^{xxxiii} Director of Navy Accounts to Director Australian War Memorial, Feb 22 1927, (6411), AA: MP 124/6 File No. 507/201/237 Defence (Navy) Series 1923-1938. This document was produced to refute apparently extraordinary claims that there were no Australians aboard *AE1* and *AE2*.

^{xxxiv} Peter Richardson at http://www.ae1submarine.com/authors_notes.html, accessed March 2007.