

Frederick William Woodland: Australian Submariner

I have chosen to research the life and war service of Frederick William Woodland, a British sailor who died in an Australian submarine in the early days of both the Royal Australian Navy and the First World War. It was challenging to both find the material and to put them into my own words. Because of his British background and his death being relatively early in the war it was more difficult to find information about him.

The Royal Australian Navy was created not long before World War One began (1914). During the conflict, sea craft were used in vast quantities. These included battleships, cargo boats, and most importantly submarines. The very first Royal Australian Navy submarine was AE1, which was an abbreviation for Australian E class submarine. The HMAS AE1 came into Sydney Harbour at 6am on 24th May 1914. It had taken 60 days for the submarine to sail from the shipyards in England to Sydney. Its crew was a mixture of British and Australian sailors. It was hailed as an invaluable addition to the Commonwealth's naval forces. There were 35 sailors on board that included 3 officers. The E class featured more torpedoes, safer diesel engines and most importantly, larger crews than previous models.

The technology used was top secret as it was metaphorically invisible to ships, which made it so valuable in the four years of fighting. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “*Few people beside those who make their home in them know the secrets that the submarines contain.*” (21st September 1914)

Unfortunately, the submarine was Australia's first warship to be lost in World War One. One of the sailors on board was Frederick William Woodland. He had been born on the 20th September 1882. His place of birth was Aldwich, Sussex, England. In official documents, Woodland was described as being 5ft and 9in in height with brown hair and hazel eyes. It was also noted that he had tattoos on his chest and both of his arms. When he left school, Woodland's first job was that of a gardener. Woodland had joined the Royal Navy as a boy 2nd class for a 12-year contract on the 26th March 1900. Four months later we was rated boy 1st class and in September 1900 he became an Ordinary Seaman. In October 1902 he advanced to Able Seaman Torpedoman. By 1905 he qualified as a Seaman Torpedoman. After

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-serving on several ships including a time spent on the Mediterranean Fleet he was drafted into the Submarine Depot ship HMS MERCURY. Here he was given submarine training. However, in 21st September 1912, he was discharged as his continuous *service in engagement* expired on the same day 12-year contract ended on that date.

As a result, Woodland volunteered his service to the Royal Australian Navy when the RAN decided to create a submarine branch. At this time the Royal Australian Navy was very similar to the Royal Navy and this might have made it easier for Woodland to make the change. Both navies had the same uniforms, signals, and both navies were under the same codes of discipline. One of the only differences was the more relaxed relationship between the officers and the sailors in the RAN. In 1914, Woodland was drafted to HMAS PENGUIN for the passage to Australia.

Woodland was assigned to the AE1 upon his arrival in Australia. Life on the ship has been described as cramped and boring. According to the Captain, Lieutenant Commander Thomas Besant, the ship had a poisonous environment with the crew sharing bunks in addition to using buckets for washing. Some even slept between torpedoes.

Frederick Woodland was a member of the crew of the AE1 when it was sent to Rabaul to hunt for the German Pacific squadron, which was under the command of Admiral Graf von Spee. They found no ships in the Rabaul Harbour so they patrolled St George's Strait instead. The AE1, along with the *Parramatta*, was patrolling the coast when at 2:30 in the afternoon the two ships lost sight of each other due to fog. The *Parramatta* returned to Rabaul thinking they would find the AE1 there, but it was not. The AE1 was never seen again. It was 14th September 1914. Frederick Woodland was 32 years of age and his next of kin was listed as his mother. His name appears on the Plymouth Naval War Memorial.

The AE2's Lieutenant Commander H. S. Stoker advised that there being no debris on the surface pointed towards a mechanical failure or a diving accident. If the sunken sub hit anything and obtained a hole, it would sink into the vast depths of the ocean. The AE1 would have filled rapidly as the pressure of the water increasing would have drowned the hull. The AE1 has not been found as it has been rumored to have sunk to the bottom of the sea, which has not got a good source of light. There was a search in September 2014.

However, it was unsuccessful. Admiral Briggs, the chairman of “Find AE1 Limited”, claimed that scientists agreed that if it was on the bottom in deep water, it would be sitting upright and intact as light does not penetrate that low. The most credible theory is that the AE1 hit a reef, penetrating the hull and quickly sank to the bottom. There might be a detailed 10-day deep-water search if “Find AE1 Limited” can find millions of dollars, as it would use the latest equipment from sonar to remote drone technologies.

It was very interesting to explore the history of Frederick Woodland and the submarine he was drafted to that was called the AE1. Although he died so early in the war, he did contribute. The AE1 had a good deal of information of it going missing and the search for it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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NAME Woodland, Fredericks William OFFICIAL NUMBER 7597

Name of Ship	List No.	No.	Rating	From	To	Class	Ability	Date Assesed	Remarks
London Depot	5 ^a	350	A. B.	5-2-13	27-2-14	W 2	Supr	DEC 31 1913	Reported missing in Submarine 451 B.C. filed at C. J. MacKip. Request for delivery to list of him through war office (transcript)
Submarine	5 ^a	8	"	28-2-14	24-3-14	W 2	Supr	14-9-14	
Penguin	12 ^a	7	"	25-5-14	14-9-14				

TO 1890 RECORD OF SERVICE. (PETTY OFFICERS AND MEN). OFFICIAL NUMBER 7597

Name Woodland, Fredericks William
 Date of Birth 20th September 1882 Place of Birth Hedwicks, Sussex
 Next of Kin (Relationship and Address) Wife, Emma Helen, 8 Council Cottages, Sheerness Lane, Sheerness, Kent

ENGAGEMENTS		MEDALS, CLASPS, Etc.		SECOND CLASS FOR CONDUCT (inclusive dates)				
Date of Commencement	Period	Date of 1st Entry in R.A.N.	Date Received	Nature of Decoration	From	To	From	To
5-2-13	5 years	5-2-13		1st Lt. W. Woodland 8 Council Cottages Sheerness Lane, Sheerness, Kent 25. 11. 13				

WAR SERVICE BADGE PAID 6784

DESCRIPTION OF PERSON					TIME FORFEITED			
Occasion	Height	Colour of Hair	Colour of Eyes	Complexion	Marks, Wounds and Scars	Date	No. of Days	P.C. or D.
On Entry as a Boy								
On Advancement to Man's Rating								
On re-entry or on entry after 28	5	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	brn.	hazel fresh	Tattooed chest & both arms			
Further description if necessary								

EXAMINATIONS AND NOTATIONS			GOOD CONDUCT BADGES		
Date	Particulars	Date	Date	1st, 2nd, 3rd	Granted, Deprived, Restored
On entry 27 (R. on 28.9.13)			On entry 6.2.14	3rd	Granted

Wounds received in Action, and Hurt Certificate; also any Meritorious Service, Special Recommendations, Praise or other Grants

Date 18.1.14
£12;10;- Prize Money Paid Legal Dep.

25 - Extra Pay for War Service in Royal Australian Navy authorized by T. A. son of W. MacKip and paid on voucher 20 October 1919 Cash Account

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By Joshua Dickinson

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Year 9

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I verify that this essay is the work of Joshua Dickinson.

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