

## **Additional Information To Accompany the AMNEF Seminar Presentation by Hough and Hitchen**

### **The Raising Of The AN&MEF And The New Zealand Occupation Of German Samoa**

*This paper was prepared by: Major John Hitchen RFD (Ret'd)*

The previous seminar's paper showed how the presence of the warships of the German East Asiatic Squadron somewhere in the Pacific Ocean and/or in the Indian Ocean hung over the heads of the decision makers in the British Admiralty, the New Zealand Government and the Australian Government and haunted them.

#### **Australian political background**

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1914, the Australian Federal Parliament had a double dissolution so the Australian nation was in the election mode leading up to the federal elections to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1914. The election had been called before the declaration of war in August 1914. All 75 seats in the House of Representatives and all 36 seats in the Senate were up for election in a double dissolution.

#### **The New Zealand occupation of German Samoa**

In New Zealand, as early as 1912, Major General Godley had been planning the seizure of German Samoa in the likely event of war with Germany to capture the wireless station and to deprive the German Squadron of a base.<sup>10</sup>

On 6<sup>th</sup> August the Governor General of New Zealand received a secret cable from London requesting New Zealand "to seize German wireless station at Samoa".<sup>7</sup>

By 11<sup>th</sup> August the composite force known as 'Samoa Advance Party, New Zealand Expeditionary Force' had been equipped and was ready to embark. It was in modern military language "a bi-service battle group" composed of:

- Headquarters
- One battery of field artillery (2 x 15 pounders, 2 x Nordenfeldt 6 pounders)
- One section field company NZ engineers
- Company NZ railway engineers
- Three infantry companies
- Machine gun section
- One signalling company
- Detachment of motor boat mechanics
- Detachment of Post and Telegraph Corps
- Detachment of Army Service Corps

- One section NZ Field Ambulance
- Detail of nurses
- Detail of chaplains
- Detail of Royal Naval Reserve<sup>7</sup>

The force was commanded by Colonel Robert Logan. The total force had 1,413 members. These had been drawn mainly from the Territorial Forces but with some who had never before handled a service rifle.<sup>7</sup>

That this force was put together within days of the declaration of war was a feat of the forward planning and effective administration of Godley's staff.<sup>10</sup>

On 12<sup>th</sup> August, a bitter winter's day, the Force marched through the streets of Wellington and embarked on HMNZT No. 1 *Monowai* and HMNZT No. 2 *Moeraki*. The masters of the transports were old Island skippers and the loading of surf boats and wireless equipment indicated that the force was bound for a self contained tropical seizure.<sup>7</sup>

On 13<sup>th</sup> August Major General Alexander Godley, GOC NZ Forces, inspected the Force on the troop ships. On 14<sup>th</sup> August the New Zealand Prime Minister, Rt Hon W.F. Massey PC inspected the troops on board the troop ships. The troops landed and exercised ashore. Later they marched through crowd lined streets to the Basin Reserve for a final farewell from the NZ Governor General before marching back to the transport ships.<sup>7</sup>

Early on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> August the troop ships sailed out of Wellington Harbour and headed north along the east coast of New Zealand.

At dusk on 16<sup>th</sup> August the third class cruisers, HMS *Psyche* and HMS *Philomel*, joined the expedition as naval escorts.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August HMS *Pyramus*, another third class cruiser, joined the escorting force. The troop ships were being painted man-o'-war gray. Wireless signals indicated that the German Squadron was somewhere in the vicinity.

The New Zealanders believed that during the night 19/20 August the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had sailed south and had passed the New Zealand convoy in the darkness.<sup>7</sup> However the Australian Official History shows that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were not in the area but they were at Eniwetok.<sup>2</sup>

At daylight on 20<sup>th</sup> August, the first port of call, Noumea in New Caledonia, was sighted. The French cruiser *Montcalm* was waiting in the harbour. Noumea was a rendezvous and coaling point for the expedition.

Early on 21<sup>st</sup> August, HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Melbourne* were off the port. The troops exercised ashore during the day.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the troopships moved away from the wharf to wait the coaling of the warships. The *Monowai* ran aground and became stuck in the mud. After unloading men and equipment, the *Monowai* was pulled into deep water at midnight on the high tide.

Early on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, the convoy consisting of six war ships and two troop transports left Noumea and headed north east towards Fiji.

On the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> August, the expedition entered Suva Harbour. Ten Legion-of-Frontiersmen and some Samoan chiefs, who had volunteered to act as guides and interpreters, joined the expedition. Some of the crew from HMS *Sealark* also joined the expedition.<sup>7</sup>

On the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> August the expedition left Suva and headed towards Samoa.

At 0500 on **29<sup>th</sup> August** the rugged backbone of Upulo in Samoa could be seen through the dispersing morning mist. The *Psyche* was sent in towards the harbour, flying a flag of truce; two picket-boats from the *Australia* accompanied her, and proceeded to sweep the channel for mines, a course which would obviously not have been adopted had any enemy warships been seen in the harbour. HMS *Psyche* signalled the town to surrender. The recently completed German high-power wireless had attempted to send an urgent call to the warships of the German Squadron. A peremptory order from the German flagship had brought immediate and final silence from the wireless station.

No reply had been received on the call to surrender. A landing party from HMS *Psyche* under the flag of truce sailed through the reef entrance and landed in front of the Government offices. They carried a dispatch from Rear Admiral Patey demanding the immediate surrender of the territory. A large crowd rushed to the landing point and the landing party was lost from view to the observers in the convoy.

The Governor, Dr Schultz, had already left for the wireless station in the hills. The Deputy-Governor intimated that the territory would not be surrendered; no resistance would be offered. A message to this effect was signalled to the flagship HMAS *Australia*.

The troopships took up position a mile outside Apia harbour. The escort warships were formed in a circle around the transports. *Australia*, *Melbourne* and *Montcalm* were on the outside but were still in gun range of Apia.

Motor launches, motor surf boats and ships' boats were launched for the disembarkation. The troops climbed down rope ladders into tossing boats. Each boat was commanded by a naval officer.

The filled boats dropped astern where they were assembled by a motor boat and towed in strings of four or five boats through the reef entrance to the sandy beach at Matautu Point. The first boats landed at 1230. The landing was completed in good time; the transports lay in a heavy swell, and the only craft available to tow in the laden boats were

a few small motor-launches, but the 1,400 men were all ashore by 2.30. Then came the turn of the guns and stores, which were landed, and the transports finally cleared, by noon, on the following day – an operation which in the Admiral's opinion reflected credit on the responsible officers.<sup>4</sup>

The main beach road, the cross roads and bridges were secured. The German flag was hauled down. Government buildings were seized. Horses, wagons and bicycles were commandeered and pressed into service. The field guns, ammunition, camp equipment and stores were then landed.

An armed party was despatched to the wireless station in the foothills some six miles inland. The Germans surrendered their arms and became prisoners of war. The wireless station had been put out of action before the New Zealanders arrived.<sup>7</sup>

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August the British flag was formally hoisted and the occupation proclaimed by Colonel Logan while the warships fired a salute from the bay. The transport ships with the late Governor of Samoa and the prisoners of war left for New Zealand.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September the warships departed leaving the New Zealanders in Samoa.<sup>7</sup>

Fortifying the wireless station, establishing a lookout position at the top of the wireless mast, preparing defensive positions and developing the camp occupied the troops. Once established on shore, the New Zealanders determined to hold the islands without naval help.<sup>2</sup>

In the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> September; two vessels were sighted. Daylight showed them to be the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. Von Spee's plan of surprising enemy shipping at anchor was thwarted by an empty harbour.<sup>7</sup>

Logan and his men stood to, expecting to withstand a naval bombardment and to repel landing parties. The ships moved in close with one entering inside the reef. Upon realising Samoa was no longer in German hands, they then sailed off without firing a shot or trying to communicate with the shore. They shelled Papeete a few days later.<sup>7</sup>

Among the reasons for not attacking the occupying forces, the following have been postulated:

- The war was expected to be over by Christmas and to be won by Germany, so to damage Samoa would be damaging German property and civilians for no strategic reason
- Not to waste irreplaceable ammunition attacking the New Zealand garrison

In April 1915 the New Zealand force was reduced to 250. Most of the original party were withdrawn. The replacements were men over military age.<sup>7</sup> Most of the men withdrawn from German Samoa went on to serve in Egypt and the Western Front.

## **The raising of the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force**

Britain declared war on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1914. On 6<sup>th</sup> August, Britain cabled a request to Australia for a force to destroy the German wireless stations in the Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

After the declaration of war, men clamoured outside Victoria Barracks in Paddington wanting to enlist. On 10<sup>th</sup> August, recruiting for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) commenced.

On 10<sup>th</sup> August Colonel Holmes was appointed as the land force commander of the ANMEF. On 10<sup>th</sup> August, Britain was advised that an expeditionary force of 1,500 men was being organised.

The proposed structure of the ANMEF was:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ANMEF (8 companies) of 1023 men
- Naval Brigade (Battalion) 6 companies of 500 men
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion ANMEF (4 companies) of 500 men from the Kennedy Regiment that was garrisoning Thursday Island.
- Two machine gun sections
- Signal section
- Medical detachment

Subsequently the 500 volunteers from the Kennedy Regiment (after inspection in Port Moresby) were rejected by Colonel Holmes- due to their lack of equipment and training. These men were retained by Rear Admiral Patey until the civilian crew of their transport ship, Kanowna, mutinied. They were returned to Townsville in the Kanowna.

On 11<sup>th</sup> August recruiting commenced for the ANMEF. Recruiting for the AIF had started on the day before. The ANMEF's role had not been announced.

Speed being an important feature of the undertaking, it was thought advisable to carry out the preparations for the expedition in Sydney. The military personnel, raised by voluntary enlistment "for service out of Australia" for a period of six months, were recruited from 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District (New South Wales); the naval section, organised by the Naval Board, was drawn from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.<sup>5</sup>

There was at the outbreak of war no special machinery for recruiting. Each military headquarters had its own provision for its day-to-day needs, and when the first rush came, in mid August, there was only an improvised service. A doctor was added here and there, another and another orderly or warrant-officer, or a junior commissioned officer, a room or two, a few tables and chairs, a telephone, and so on. The only appeal to the public in the nature of propaganda was the bare notification from the Minister that volunteers were wanted for an overseas military force, to apply at the nearest barracks. Such was the zest of the community, that these hasty and insufficient arrangements worked, and soon a

stream of acceptable recruits was flowing through the barrack yards of every military headquarters.<sup>4</sup>

The first rush of volunteers naturally came from the great towns, and they consisted very largely of men who had war experience or men with some amount of military training.<sup>4</sup>

At this stage of the war, there were more volunteers than positions available in both the AIF and ANMEF so the medical standards that were applied were significantly higher than later in the war.

Volunteers for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ANMEF were marched from Victoria Barracks, Paddington, to the Agricultural Show Grounds at Moore Park. There they were given a medical examination, sworn in, issued uniforms and equipment, about 600 men received remedial dental treatment and all commenced training.

The ANMEF soldiers received priority for issue of clothing and equipment over the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade AIF concurrently being raised in Sydney.<sup>1</sup>

On the original enlistment form, the men undertook to serve in His Majesty's forces anywhere, on land or on sea, for an unlimited period. On the day before the Force left Australia the men had to be re-sworn on a new attestation form which had been prepared to meet the case of service outside Australia in the A.I.F. This form required more detailed personal information and ran into four pages of particulars. The period of service for the ANMEF, in stead of being indefinite was stated as six months.

On August 9<sup>th</sup> the Principal Medical Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District received instructions from Defence Department Headquarters to assemble a "detail" of medical personnel to consist of 4 officers, 1 warrant officer, and 35 other ranks. No record is available as to the grounds on which this particular number of officers and rank and file was selected. It did not fit in with any establishment. No special provision was made for medical personnel with the Naval Reserve battalion.<sup>5</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel N. Howse VC accepted command of the medical detachment to be raised with the "*Force for the Pacific Islands*".<sup>5</sup>

Officially the "medical detail" was equipped only with medical and surgical "panniers" and other mobilisation stores on the scale laid down for one section of a field ambulance. Lieutenant-Colonel Howse was told that the destination of the force was "German New Guinea" but he received no direction as to its probable distribution or the number of posts that might have to be occupied. Official information was moreover lacking with regard to the medical conditions likely to be encountered or the resources that might be available in the way of hospitals, transport, and medical supplies.<sup>5</sup>

On his own initiative therefore Howse made such general provision for a tropical campaign as was possible in the time available. A large supply of quinine was taken and some emetine; by special requisition a microscope was added to the equipment. The Red

Cross Society supplied hospital bags, medical comforts, and also certain necessaries such as mosquito netting and dressings.<sup>5</sup>

Good billets and headquarters were found in the buildings of the Royal Agricultural Society, in Sydney, where Show Grounds provided ample space for training. Here recruits were attested, while the medical examination was carried out at Victoria Barracks. The standard of physical and mental fitness required for the force was a high one, being that laid down for enlistment in the Australian permanent forces.<sup>5</sup>

All ranks were inoculated against typhoid fever, the procedure being completed on board ship, where also vaccination against small-pox was carried out.<sup>5</sup>

A dental inspection of each man was carried out, as a voluntary and gratuitous service, by the Dental Association of New South Wales, and as much dental work was done as was possible in the time available. No official provision was made for a dental establishment with the force, but Lieutenant-Colonel Howse secured the enlistment as a private in the medical detail of a fourth-year undergraduate in dentistry of the Sydney University, who provided himself with a small kit of dental instruments.<sup>5</sup>

The uniforms and clothing supplied were entirely unsuited for wear in the tropics, being of wool and heavy. As in the A.I.F., boots were of good quality, and their fitting, together with foot discipline, occupied the close attention of the medical officers during the eight days that the Force remained in Sydney.<sup>5</sup>

Although most of the men had enlisted in the ANMEF within the first few days, some in specialist postings such as Captain Brian Pockley AAMC did not apply to join the ANMEF until 17<sup>th</sup> August.

An incredible seven days later (18<sup>th</sup> August 1914), the force was inspected by the State Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland.<sup>9</sup>

On 18<sup>th</sup> August the men were marched from the Show Grounds along Randwick Road, along Oxford Street and down Macquarie Street to Fort Macquarie from where they were transported by two Sydney Harbour ferries to Cockatoo Island to embark on HMAS Berrima. On 19<sup>th</sup> August, HMAS Berrima sailed out of Sydney heads and headed north.

While the troops were embarking, the Minister for Defence, Senator Millen chastised Colonel Holmes for taking so long to raise and embark the Force.<sup>12</sup> In 1900 it had taken longer to raise a smaller force for the Boer War without the distractions of the concurrent raising of the AIF and the Federal election.

The Minister for Defence decreed on August 18<sup>th</sup> that “only single men need apply” to enlist in the armed forces and, although this order was countermanded three days later, it had a distinctly damping effect upon the recruiting enthusiasm.

The naval battalion was formed with six companies from the Royal Australian Naval Reserve. Companies 1, 2 and 3 came from NSW, Nos. 4 and 5 from Victoria whilst No.6 Company mainly consisted of men from South Australia. Some Queensland personnel were attached to the NSW companies. Each company consisted of about 50 men under the command of a Lieutenant. Provision was made for a further subdivision into left and right half companies each of which was led by a junior officer, usually a midshipman.<sup>13</sup>

The naval companies were formed at the naval depots in the capital cities. The 4, 5 and 6 companies were kitted out at the Port Melbourne Naval Reserve Depot with the new Lee Enfield .303 rifle. They left Melbourne on a special train for Sydney on 17 August and on arrival early on the following day, they marched from Central Station to Sydney Cove to join the expedition members from Queensland and New South Wales and to board the troopship.<sup>11</sup>

The quiet and unobtrusive way in which the naval contingent had assembled and embarked contrasted greatly with the way the Army decided to publicise its own contribution.<sup>11</sup>

In Sydney little time had been available for training, but on the voyage up the Australian coast and during the stay at the Palm Islands all ranks of the force were instructed in personal hygiene, particularly in the precautions required to preserve health in the tropics. During the ten clear days that the *Berrima* waited, detachments of all arms went ashore daily for training and exercise. Though chafed at by the force, this respite did much to promote the health of these young troops, few of them had previously been in the tropics.<sup>5</sup>

Each day the men were taken ashore where they were drilled in manoeuvres and taught how to stay in touch with each other when in thickly wooded country. A rifle range was set up and used to train the men in proper use of their rifles. This period of intense training was vital for two major reasons. The recruitment and kitting-out process had been done so quickly that virtually no time at all had been made available for training in military discipline and use of weapons. Many of the men had no background in these areas. In addition there was a very real need to provide at least some means by which the men could become acclimatised to tropical conditions.<sup>13</sup>

## **Ships taken over by the RAN for support of the ANMEF operation**

The Peninsular and Oriental liner *Berrima* was chartered by the Commonwealth Government as a transport and then commissioned as an auxiliary cruiser. She had been armed with four 4.7 inch guns and was commissioned as **HMAS Berrima** on 17<sup>th</sup> August. She transported the army and navy members of the ANMEF from Sydney to Rabaul. Her large holds provide fine troop-decks; lavatory and latrine accommodation was ample, and, though deck space for exercise was small. The vessel was well suited for the purpose. A liberal supply of fresh water was available and was an important factor in the excellent health record that was achieved.<sup>5</sup> HMAS *Berrima*'s pennant number was T1.

The Adelaide Steamship Company ship Grantala was requisitioned by the RAN on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and became Australia's first hospital ship and the only RAN hospital ship of the First World War. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1913 the Royal Naval establishment at Garden Island was handed over to the Commonwealth Government as a going concern. Amongst the material taken over was a stock of medical stores – drugs and instruments – and complete stores and fittings for a hospital ship (No. 8 in the Admiralty Mobilisation Scheme).<sup>6</sup> **HMAS Grantala** was fitted out at Cockatoo Island Dockyard and Garden Island Naval Base. She had beds for 180 patients; a maximum of 300 patients could be catered for. Ten doctors, six sisters and a matron were her medical staff. During her short RAN service, she supported the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force landing at Rabaul. She arrived in Blanche Bay in New Britain on 13<sup>th</sup> September. Her pennant number was VIII.

Both HMAS Berrima and HMAS Grantala received the battle honour “**Rabaul 1914**”.

### **Notes:**

1. This paper is based entirely on secondary sources especially the volumes of the Australian and New Zealand Official Histories. The main sources are listed below. The selected material reflects the personal views of the writer.
2. All dates used in this paper are Australian.

### **References:**

1. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume I, The story of ANZAC by C.E.W. Bean
2. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume IX, The Royal Australian Navy by A.W. Jose
3. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume X, The Australians at Rabaul by S.S. MacKenzie
4. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume XI, Australia during the War by Ernest Scott
5. Official History of Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume I Gallipoli Palestine and New Guinea by A.G. Butler
6. Official History of Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914 – 18, Volume 3 Problems and Services by A. G. Butler
7. Official History of New Zealand's Effort in the Great War Volume IV The War Effort of New Zealand edited by Lieut. H.T.B. Drew
8. Wartime Issue 30 pages 59 to 62
9. The Battle History of the Royal New South Wales Regiment, Volume 1, by MAJGEN Gordon Maitland
10. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force in World War 1, by Wayne Stack
11. Navy Historical Review, Volume 35 Number 1, March 2014, pages 15 to 22
12. Heroes before Gallipoli, by Kevin Meade
13. Australia's Real Baptism of Fire by Greg Raffin

