Tidworth Military Cemetery,

Tidworth, Wiltshire

War Graves

Lest We Forget

World War 1

2138   LDG. SEAMAN

R. P. EVANS

H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA"

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

20TH JANUARY, 1919   Age 22

*God Will Link The Broken*
Chain
Dear Son When We Meet Again

Robert Parker EVANS

Robert Parker Evans was born on 4th June, 1896 at Brookvale, Manly, New South Wales to parents Robert and Susanna Parker Evans (nee Smith).

Robert Parker Evans, aged 16, joined Royal Australian Navy on 28th September, 1912 for a period of 7 years. He was 5ft 5 ¼ inches; black curly hair, brown eyes; dark complexion & had no marks, wounds or scars. His religion was Presbyterian & his next-of-kin was listed as his father – Mr Robert Evans, Elsie Cottage, Brookvale, via Manly, NSW

Boy 2nd Class Robert Parker Evans joined HMAS "*Tingira*" (a training ship) on 28th September, 1912 with an Official number of 2138. He was promoted to Boy 1st Class on 16th July, 1912.

Boy 1st Class Robert Parker Evans was transferred to HMAS *Australia* on 15th October, 1913. He was promoted to Ordinary Seaman II on 13th November, 1913 then Ordinary Seaman on 4th June, 1914.
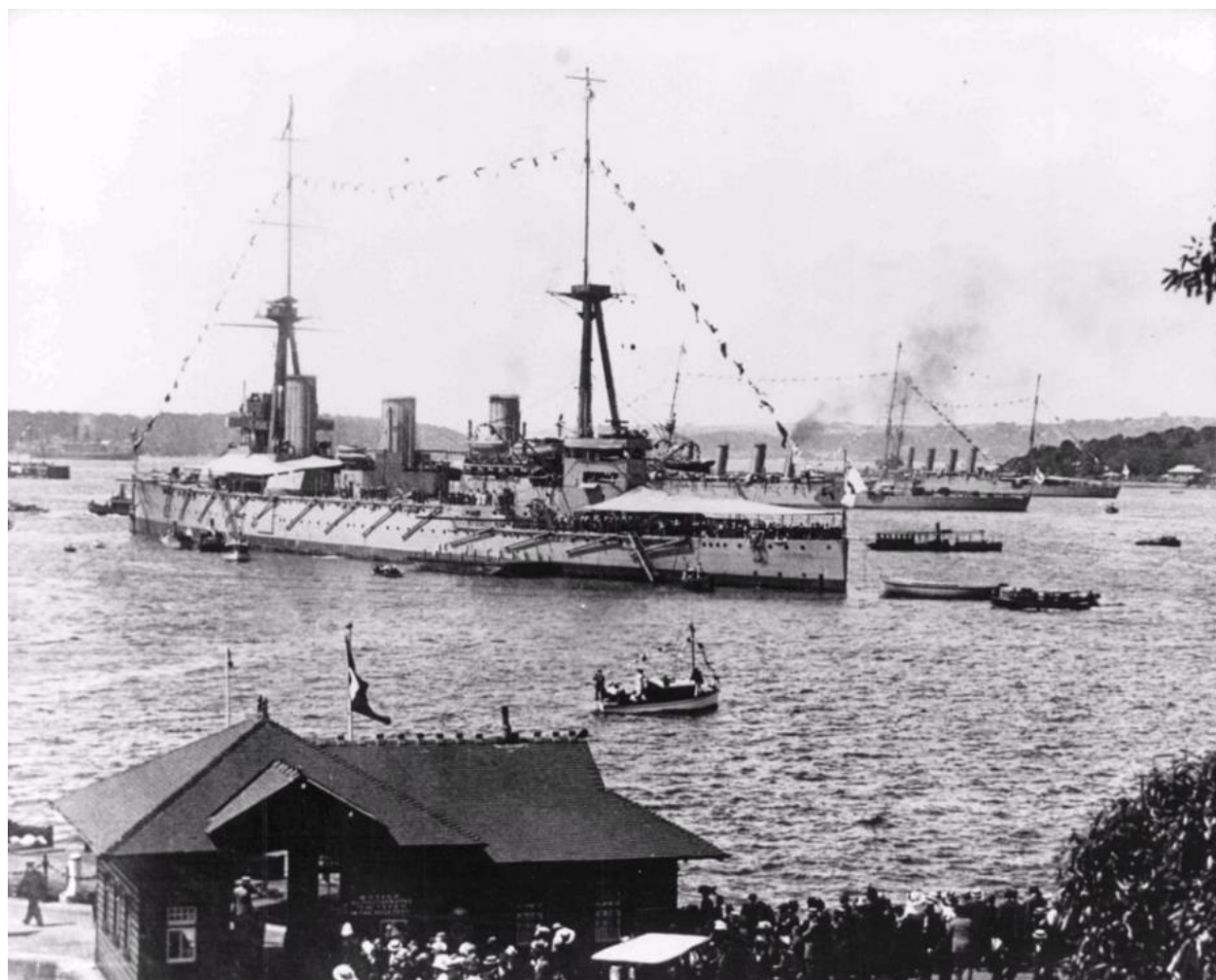
HMAS *Australia* entering Sydney Harbour for the first time on 4 October 1913

(Photo from Navy.gov.au)

On advancement to Men's Ratings (as opposed to Boy Ratings) Robert Parker Evans was described as 5ft 6 inches; black curly hair, brown eyes; dark complexion & had the following tattoos – "Tattooed female in sailor suit Kia Ora underneath Life Buoy with full rigged ship in centre. Union Jack flag on anchor & capstan around Welsh dagger in flesh."

Ordinary Seaman Robert Parker Evans was promoted to Able Seaman on 18th August, 1915 while still serving in HMAS *Australia*. He was promoted to Leading Seaman on 26th September, 1917.

HMAS *Australia*

The Australian Navy's first flagship, the battle cruiser HMAS Australia (I) was the centrepiece of the 'Fleet Unit', whose acquisition signalled the RAN's arrival as a credible ocean going force.

Ordered from John Brown and Company in March 1910, construction began three months later with the total cost of the ship and fittings expected to be some £2 million.

The Commonwealth Government decided upon the name Australia, and it proved a popular choice, carefully avoiding any suggestion of favouritism towards any one Australian State. The ship's badge maintained the national theme by featuring the Federation Star overlaid by a naval crown, while the motto 'Endeavour' reflected the ideal of the Australian spirit and recalled Lieutenant James Cook's ship of 1768-71…….

In company with the new light cruiser HMAS Sydney (I), Australia (I) sailed from Portsmouth on 21 July 1913, and their voyage home was seen as a further opportunity to stimulate public awareness and naval sentiment around the British Empire. The appearance of the Australian warships would, the Sydney Morning Herald remarked, provide a practical demonstration of the RAN as a 'thoroughly competent, efficient, and considerable force'. Australia (I) called in at Capetown where Patey and his officers were directed to extend every possible courtesy……

On the morning of 4 October 1913 Australia (I), leading the remaining ships of the Fleet Unit (the cruisers Melbourne (I), Sydney (I) and Encounter, and the destroyers Warrego (I), Parramatta (I) and Yarra (I)), entered Sydney for the first time. Port Jackson was no stranger to imperial and foreign warships, but the battle cruiser, both majestic and forbidding at the same time, was something different. She was the embodiment of the Commonwealth's own sea power, and unquestionably superior to every other European warship in the Pacific. Already described as a 'living sentient thing', Australia (I)'s entry at the head of the fleet evoked a nationalistic euphoria never before experienced. 'The sight of the Fleet meant more to the Australian people than the visit of any foreign fleet. It was our expression of patriotism, ships of defence bought in love of country and empire...' wrote the Sydney Mail……

Arrangements were made at the first opportunity for the flagship to visit many of the principal Australian ports. Within a year she had called at Albany, Port Lincoln, Hobart, Glenelg and Melbourne, and steamed as far north as Townsville in a deliberate attempt to showcase the Navy to the widest national audience. Australia's popularity extended to mass entertainment and in addition to becoming the subject of several popular songs she played the starring role in the feature film Sea Dogs of Australia, which opened on 12 August 1914.

On the outbreak of World War I Australia (I) operated (with other ships of the Australian Fleet) as a counter to the German East Asian Cruiser Squadron under Admiral Graf von Spee. The battle cruiser's presence deterred von Spee from operating in local waters, and as Prime Minister WM 'Billy' Hughes later declared, 'but for the "Australia (I)"...the great cities of Australia would have been reduced to ruins, oversea trade paralysed, coastal shipping sunk, and communications with the outside world cut off'. Australia (I) meanwhile kept busy, taking part in a series of operations to seize German Pacific colonies and destroy the enemy's radio network. During these operations Australia (I) captured the German ship Sumatra.

In late December 1914 Australia (I) received orders to sail to England via the Pacific and reached Devonport on 28 January 1915. En route she captured and sank von Spee's supply ship Eleonore Woermann (5000 tons) off South America. From Devonport Australia (I) proceeded to Rosyth in Scotland, where in February 1915 she became flagship of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron, flying the flag of Rear Admiral Sir William Pakenham, KCB, MVO. The squadron as initially formed comprised Australia (I) and her two sister ships, HMS New Zealand and HMS Indefatigable. From then until 22 April 1916, Australia (I) was based at Rosyth accompanying the Battle Cruiser Fleet on a succession of sweeps, patrols, and convoy escort tasks across the length and breadth of the North Sea. The enemy was rarely if ever seen, and a shot at a suspected submarine on 30 December 1917 marked the only occasion when she fired her armament in anger.

On 22 April 1916 Australia (I) collided with New Zealand in heavy fog and the damage kept her in dockyard hands until 9 June 1916. She thus missed the Battle of Jutland, her place as flagship of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron being taken by New Zealand. On her return to service in June 1916, Australia (I) continued North Sea patrols as a unit of the British Grand Fleet until 12 November 1917, when another collision, this time with HMS Repulse, caused her to be docked for three weeks. Repairs completed, she resumed her generally uneventful routine of patrol and fleet exercises in the North Sea.

The routine was briefly broken by a call in February 1918 for volunteers for special service. In April, one officer and ten ratings from Australia (I) found themselves among 1300 other volunteers taking part in a bold commando raid on the occupied Belgian ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge. The Australians acquitted themselves well, with six receiving awards for bravery.

The last year of the war also saw Australia (I) used for aircraft experiments, with the ship's echelon turrets being thought to offer better wind exposure and a safer take-off position than alternative warships. On 7 March 1918 Australia (I) successfully launched a Sopwith 1½ Strutter from a platform erected on one of her 12-inch gun turrets. This was the first ever launching of a two-seater aircraft from a battle cruiser. Australia (I) would go on to achieve the first take-off with a full load on 4 April 1918 and launch several more flights without difficulty, including one at anchor. By the end of the war nearly every British capital ship carried a Strutter for reconnaissance and a Sopwith Pup or Sopwith On 11 November 1918, the signing of the Armistice brought the fighting in Europe to an end. On 21 November, the Grand Fleet came out from the Firth-of-Forth in two divisions to meet the German High Seas Fleet steaming across the North Sea to be interned at Scapa Flow. Australia (I) had the honour of leading the port line at the head of her squadron. Melbourne (I) and Sydney (I) were also there, taking their place among the light cruisers. After anchoring, each enemy ship was allocated a guard-ship. Australia (I) was given charge of the latest German battle cruiser Hindenburg.Camel as a fighter.

(extract of information on HMAS *Australia* from *Navy.gov.au)*

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL   H17500

HMAS *Australia*

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans was transferred to London Depot from 4th December, 1918.

Robert Parker Evans married Beatrice Elizabeth Jones on 19th December, 1918 in Cardiff, Wales.

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans' wife – Beatrice, of Cardiff (but rest of details are faded & illegible) was added to his Record of Service file.

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans died on 20th January, 1919 at Military Hospital, Bulford, Wiltshire, England from Pneumonia.

A death for Robert Evans, aged 22, was registered in the March quarter, 1919 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire, England.

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans was buried in Tidworth Military Cemetery, Wiltshire, England – Plot number C. 228 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans – service number 2138, aged 22, of H.M.A.S. Australia, Royal Australian Navy. He was the son of Robert and Susanna Parker Evans, of Elsie Cottage, Brookvale, Manly, New South Wales.

Leading Seaman R. P. Evans is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 1.

Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

Leading Seaman R. P. Evans is remembered on Royal Australian Navy WW1 Memorial, located at HMAS *Cerberus* Protestant Chapel of St Mark, Nelson Road, Crib Point, Victoria.

HMAS *Cerberus* Protestant Chapel of St Mark, Crib Point, Victoria *(Photos courtesy of Karen Standen)*

Royal Australian Navy WW1 Memorial, Crib Point

Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans is remembered by the Grangetown Remembering World War 1 website, though he is not remembered on the Grangetown War Memorial in Grange Gardens, Cardiff, Wales.

G R A N G E T O W N
Remembering World War I
Anniversary 1914-2014

www.grangetownwar.co.uk

(2 pages of Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans' Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour) & National Archives

Newspaper Notices

On Active Service

EVANS – Died of influenza at Australian Hospital Bulford, Wiltshire, England, Leading Seaman Robert Parker Evans, of H.M.A.S. Australia, January 20, 1919, aged 23. Deeply regretted by the Royal Australian Navy, of which he was a very promising member.

(*The Sydney Morning Herald*, NSW – 6 February, 1919)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.
(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Leading Seaman R. P. Evans does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

God Will Link The Broken Chain

Dear Son When We Meet Again

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Tidworth Military Cemetery, Wiltshire, England

Tidworth Military Cemetery, which contains burials of both wars, was directly connected with training grounds on, or near, Salisbury Plain.

During the First World War, the cemetery was used for burials from Tidworth and Fargo Military Hospitals and the 417 graves, many of them of Australian or New Zealand servicemen, are scattered throughout the cemetery.

There are 106 Second World War graves in the cemetery, two substantial groups of which can be found in sections F and D. The rest are scattered.

The cemetery also contains 40 war graves of other nationalities, many of them Polish.

(Information from CWGC)

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL   D00327

The AIF Tidworth cemetery under snow. – March 1919.

Identified graves marked by a cross and headstone in the foreground

Front row: 50727 Private Rowland James Dickson, Australian Machine Gun Corps, died 14 October 1918.

Second row, left to right: 18282 Driver John Thalma Jackson, Details Australian Engineers, died 30 October 1917; 17445 Pte Roland Travers Woodville, Australian Army Medical Corps, died 13 September 1917; 31712 Gunner John Alexander McDonald, 15th Field Artillery Brigade, Australian Field Artillery, died 30 July 1917, aged 37, at Tidworth Military Hospital; 3062 Pte Even Thomas Kennedy, 3rd Australian Pioneers, died 7 August 1917.

Note Gunner McDonald has a large headstone which reads in part 'erected by his sorrowing comrades of the Australian Field Artillery. His duty done.'

Tidworth Military Cemetery *(Photo by julia&keld – Find a Grave)*

Tidworth Military Cemetery, Wiltshire *(Photo courtesy of John Prestidge)*

Tidworth Military Cemetery, Wiltshire *(Photo by Chris Talbot 2009)*

(Photo courtesy of Portsmouth Remembers – Kevin)

Photo of Leading Seaman R. P. Evans' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Tidworth Military Cemetery, Wiltshire, England.

(Photo courtesy of Selena Hardie)

TIDWORTH MILITARY CEMETERY