

# Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent



*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1



**FLIGHT SUB-LIEUTENANT**

**D. W. HARRISON**

**H.M.S. "TORRENT "**

**ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE**

**23RD DECEMBER, 1917 Age 25**

## Douglas William HARRISON

Douglas William Harrison was born on 22nd December, 1891 at St. John Street, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia to parents Ernest Arthur & Jessie Margaret Harrison (nee Synnot). Ernest Arthur Harrison was listed as a Shore-broker.

The 1914, 1915 & 1917 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Melbourne, subdivision of Lonsdale recorded Douglas William Harrison, Engineer, of 473 Bourke St., Melbourne, Victoria. Also listed at the same address was Jessie Margaret Harrison, Restaurant keeper & Ruby Harrison, Cashier.

Douglas William Harrison joined the British Air Force (Naval). His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs A. M. Harrison of Oxford Chambers, Bourke St, Melbourne, Australia. His occupation in civilian life was listed as Engineer.

Douglas William Harrison was posted as Temporary Flight Sub-Lieutenant to K B (possibly Kite Balloon) Rockhampton on 10th September, 1917. His records do not show any further transfers but Temporary Flight Sub-Lieutenant Douglas William Harrison was on board H.M.S. *Torrent* on 22nd December, 1917.

### **H.M.S. *Torrent***

H.M.S. *Torrent* was a Royal Navy R-class destroyer operational in February, 1917 for the First World War.

H.M.S. *Torrent* was part of the escort of a Netherlands-bound convoy on 22nd December, 1917. With visibility reduced by bad weather, the destroyer H.M.S. *Valkyrie* struck a mine and was badly damaged, having to be towed to Harwich by the destroyer H.M.S. *Sylph*. The remainder of the convoy reached the Hook of Holland safely, and the escort waited near the Maas Light Buoy for the return convoy. These were regular escorts & the convoys would have been known by the German Flotilla. A new minefield had been laid by the German Navy earlier in December.

In the early hours of 23rd December, 1917 H.M.S. *Torrent* also ran into the German minefield. H.M.S. *Surprise* and H.M.S. *Tornado* went to rescue H.M.S. *Torrent's* crew, but H.M.S. *Torrent* struck a second mine and quickly sank. In an attempt to rescue survivors, H.M.S. *Surprise* and H.M.S. *Tornado* also struck mines and sank. Only H.M.S. *Radiant* was undamaged and picked up the survivors from the three ships. In total, 12 officers and 240 other ranks were killed from the three ships. Only three of H.M.S. *Torrent's* crew survived, with 68 killed.



**H.M.S. *Torrent***

Flight Sub-Lieutenant Douglas William Harrison was killed by a mine explosion to H.M.S. *Torrent* in the North Sea on 23rd December, 1917, along with most of the crew.

Flight Sub-Lieutenant Douglas William Harrison was entitled to British War Medal.

Probate details:

Harrison, Douglas William of Victoria Australia died 23 December, 1917 at sea. Administration (limited) London 16 November to the Public Trustee Attorney of Curator of Estates. Effects £183 9s. 2d.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records Flight Sub-Lieutenant Douglas William Harrison, aged 25, of H.M.S. "Torrent", Royal Naval Air Service. He was the only son of Jessie Margaret Harrison, of "Maisonnette", Woodend, Victoria, Australia and the late Ernest Harrison. Born in Tasmania.

Flight Sub-Lieutenant D. W. Harrison is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



**Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial** (*Capital Photographer*)



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **ADMIRALTY REPORT**

The Secretary of the Admiralty announces the following casualties:-

KILLED

Flight Sub-Lieut. D. W. HARRISON, R.N.

*(Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England – 2 January, 1918)*

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### **DIED ON SERVICE**

HARRISON – On the 23rd December, Flight Sub-Lieut. Douglas W. Harrison, R.N., of the R.N.A.S., only son of Jessie M. Harrison, aged 25 years.

*(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia – 29 December, 1917) & (The Australasian, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia – 5 January, 1918)*

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### **Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England**

Chatham Naval Memorial overlooks the town of Chatham, Kent, England. It commemorates more than 8,500 Royal Navy personnel from World War 1 & over 10,000 Navy personnel from World War 2 who were lost or buried at sea.

After the Armistice, the Naval Authorities and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were determined to find an appropriate way to commemorate naval personnel who had no grave.

An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain - Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth - should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping.

The Chatham Naval Memorial was unveiled by The Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, on 26 April 1924.



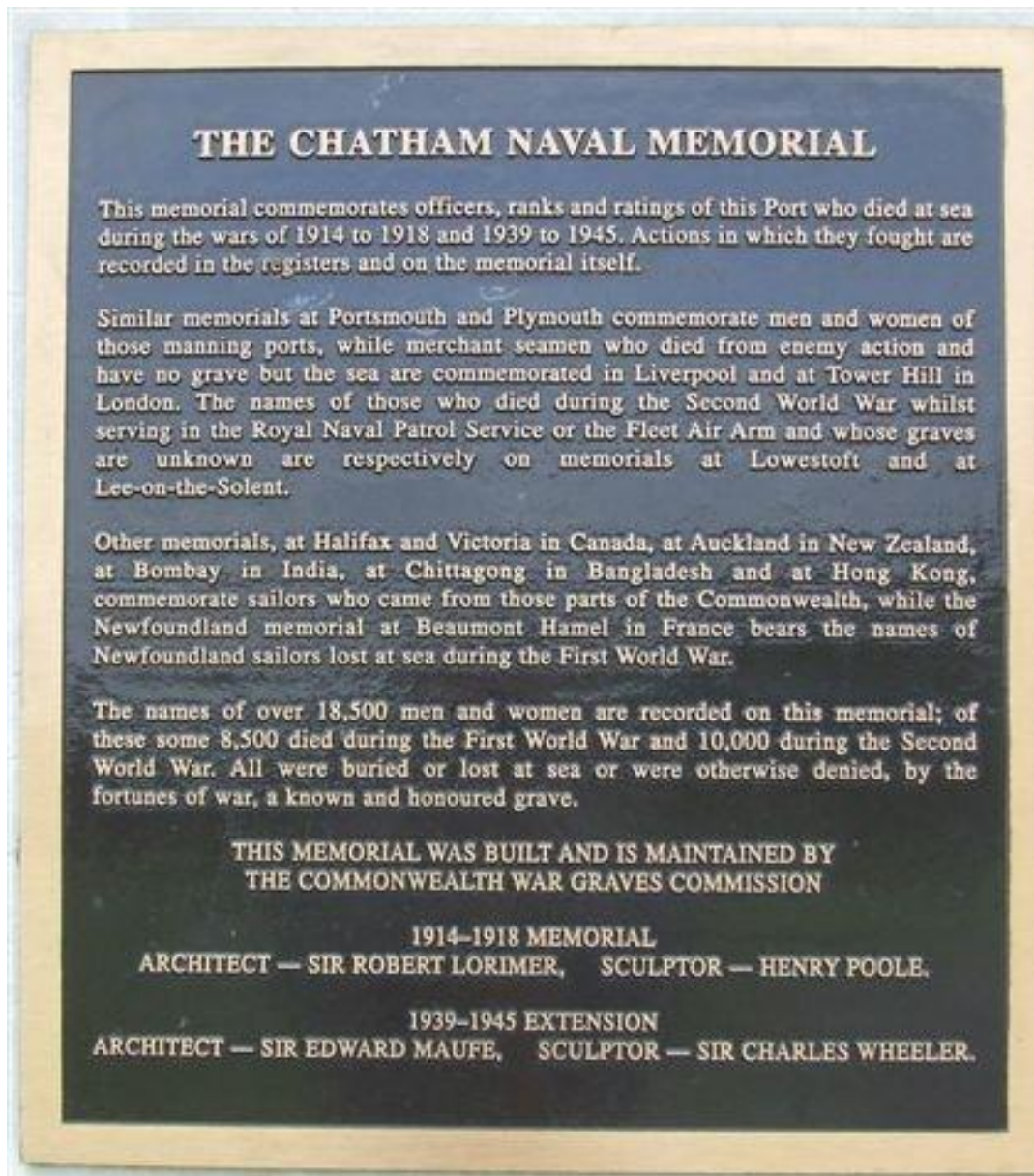
**Chatham Naval Memorial** *(Photo from CWGC)*



**Chatham Naval Memorial** (*Photo by Clem Rutter*)



Chatham Naval Memorial (Photo from CWGC)

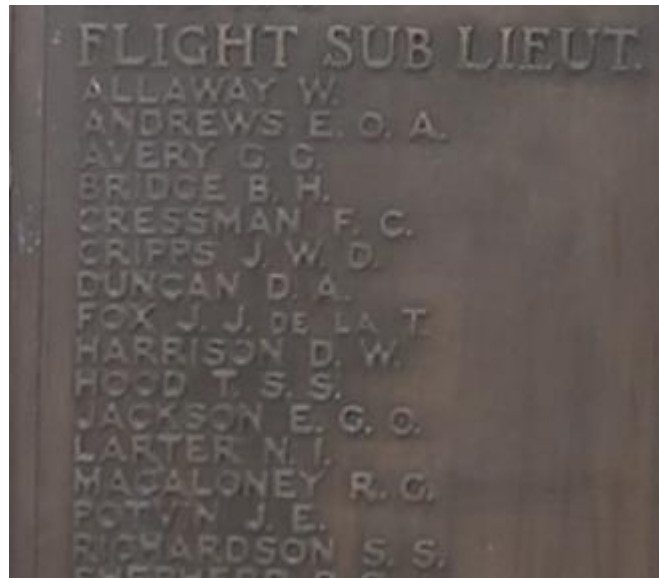


(Photo by Geoffrey Gillon)

Flight Sub-Lieutenant D. W. Harrison is remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England as he has no known grave - Memorial reference 25.



(Photo by Brad Evans)



Research on the Australians remembered on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, England was completed as part of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's "For Those In Peril" project.

*'For Those in Peril' is an initiative to encourage people to research, remember and share local stories of those who left their homes to join the war at sea, whose names are engraved on the Commission's three naval memorials at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham.*

*The project has been launched to coincide with the opening of the Poppies: Wave at the CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial, presented by 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions, to mark the centenary of the First World War.*



*(Photo from 1418 NOW)*





**Poppies: Wave By Paul Cummins, Artist and Tom Piper, Designer  
at CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial**

**23 August - 19 November, 2017**

*(Photo from 1418 NOW)*

*Poppies: Wave, a sweeping arch of bright red poppy heads suspended on towering stalks, was originally seen at the Tower of London as part of the installation Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red. It can currently be seen at the CWGC Plymouth Naval Memorial.*