

**Queensferry Cemetery,  
Edinburgh, Scotland,  
War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**C. F. OWENS**

**ABLE SEAMAN 3237**

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY**

**H.M.A.S. "AUSTRALIA"**

**12TH NOVEMBER, 1916 Age 21**

*Who Fights*

*On The Side Of God*

*Need Never Be Afraid*

## Clifford Frank OWENS

Frank James Clifford Owens was born on 5th May, 1895 at Bushfield near Woodford, Victoria to parents James & Eliza Owens (nee Asplin).

Clifford Frank Owens enlisted with the Royal Australian Navy on 3rd July, 1913 for a period of 7 years. His service number was 3237 & his next-of-kin was his mother – Elizabeth Owens. He was 5ft 7 ½ in tall with light brown hair, grey eyes & a fair complexion.

Clifford Frank Owens joined H.M.A.S. *Cerberus* as an Ordinary Seaman on 3rd July, 1913.

### **H.M.A.S. *Cerberus***

Previously H.M.V.S. *Cerberus* was renamed H.M.A.S. *Cerberus* when the navy became the Royal Australian Navy in 1911. By World War I, the weapons and boilers on H.M.A.S. *Cerberus* were inoperable & was confined to Port Phillip Bay in Victoria, Australia. The ship was retasked as a guardship and munitions store, while carrying the personnel of the Royal Australian Naval College on her paybooks.

Ordinary Seaman Clifford Frank Owens was transferred to H.M.A.S. *Protector* on 1st October, 1913.

### **H.M.A.S. *Protector***

In 1901, *Protector* was transferred to the Australian Commonwealth Government and became a Commonwealth naval vessel primarily based in Sydney, New South Wales. In the years leading up to the establishment of an Australian Naval Fleet, *Protector* was active around the southern and eastern seaboard. Her main role was to train the Naval Militia Forces of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, a duty which she continued on following the foundation of the Royal Australian Navy. From September 1913, she served as a tender to the naval base HMAS *Cerberus* in Williamstown, Victoria and was serving in that capacity at the outbreak of World War I, when she was sent to Sydney to act as parent ship to the two new Australian submarines *AE1* and *AE2*.

Ordinary Seaman Clifford Frank Owens was transferred to H.M.A.S. *Australia* on 10th June, 1914. He was promoted to Able Seaman on 17th July, 1915.

### **H.M.A.S. *Australia***

H.M.A.S. *Australia* was launched in 1911, and commissioned as flagship of the Royal Australian Navy (R.A.N.) in 1913. On completion she sailed for Australia and, on 4 October 1913, led the cruisers and destroyers of the fleet unit into Sydney Harbour to public acclaim.

With the outbreak of the First World War, *Australia* became the flagship of the force that captured the German colonies in the southern Pacific. She led a force which captured Rabaul on 13th September, 1914 before proceeding to Samoa.

In late December, 1914 H.M.A.S. *Australia* received orders to sail to England via the Pacific and reached Devonport on 28th January, 1915. En route she captured and sank von Spee's supply ship *Eleonore Woermann* off South America. From Devonport, H.M.A.S. *Australia* proceeded to Rosyth in Scotland, where in February, 1915 she became flagship of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron. The squadron, as initially formed, comprised *Australia* and her two sister ships, HMS *New Zealand* and HMS *Indefatigable*. From then until 22 April 1916, *Australia* 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 subsequently fired in anger.



**H.M.A.S. Australia 1914**

Able Seaman Clifford Frank Owens died on 12th November, 1916 at Rosyth, Fife, Scotland from an accidental fractured skull. (Source: Australian War Memorial – Roll of Honour.) According to the Weekly Times, Victoria, Able Seaman Clifford Frank Owens fell about 20 feet and fractured the base of his skull.

Able Seaman Clifford Frank Owens was buried in Queensferry Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland – Plot number 649 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Able Seaman Clifford Owens – service number 3237, aged 21, of H.M.A.S. “Australia”, Royal Australian Navy. He was the son of James & Eliza Owens, of Mailor’s Flat, Victoria, Australia.

Able Seaman C. F. Owens 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*

F. C. Owens is remembered on the Warrnambool Soldiers Memorial located as Merri & Leibig Streets, Cannon Hill, Warrnambool, Victoria.



**Warrnambool Soldiers Memorial**

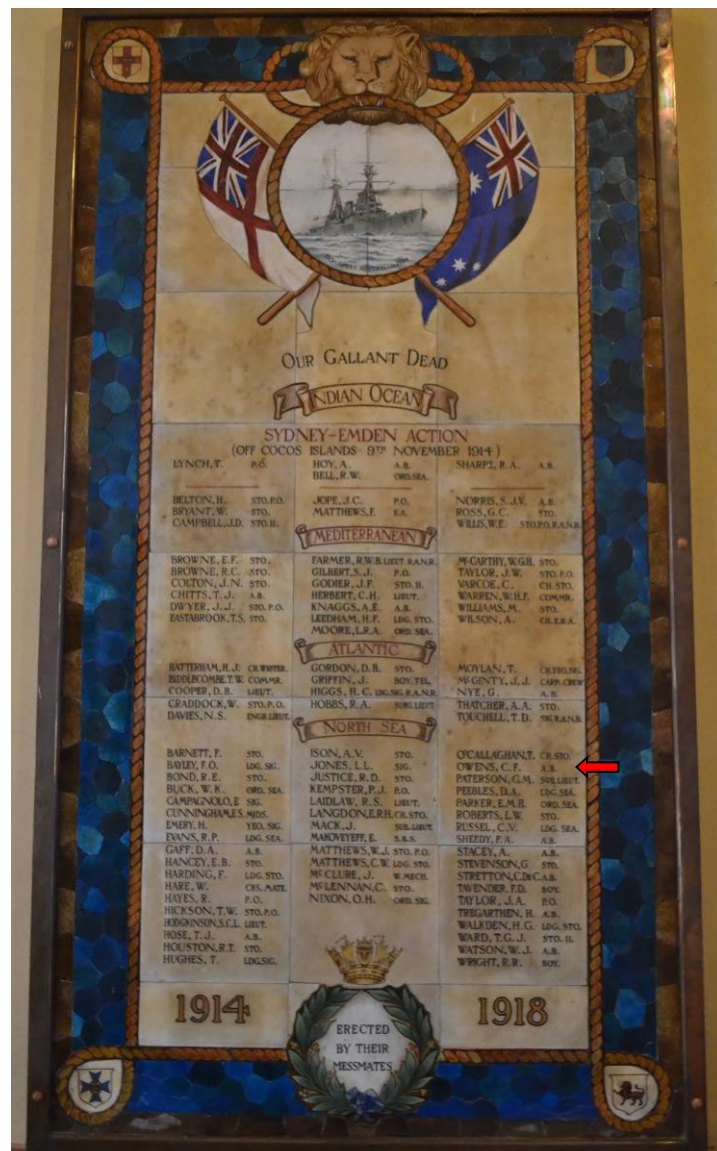
(Photos from Monument Australia – Kent Watson/ Graeme Saunders/ Arthur Garland/ Roger Johnson)



Able Seaman C. F. Owens 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)





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P10628.001

Memorial card with studio portrait of 3237 Able Seaman (AB) Clifford Frank Owens

## **Newspaper Notices**

### **DEATH**

#### **ON ACTIVE SERVICE**

OWENS – Frank Clifford Owens, of H.M.A.S. Australia, dearly beloved son of James and Elizabeth Owens, Mailer's Flat, aged 21 years and 7 months.

*(Warrnambool Standard, Victoria – 18 November, 1916)*

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#### **HERO APPRECIATED**

Keen sorrow was felt by residents of Mailer's Flat (writes a correspondent), when it became known that Clifford Owens, of H.M.A.S. Australia, had died. He was beloved by all on board and held in high esteem by all with whom he came in contact. Much sympathy is felt for his sorrowing relatives.

*(Warrnambool Standard, Victoria – 30 November, 1916)*

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#### **THE CHURCHES**

Mailer's Flat Presbyterian Church

An In Memoriam service in connection with the death on active service of the late Clifford Owen, of the "Australia" will be conducted in the evening, commencing at 8 o'clock, by the Rev. W. Bett.

*(Warrnambool Standard, Victoria – 16 December, 1916)*

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#### **IN MEMORIAM**

OWENS – In memory of the late Clifford Owens, son of Mrs E. Owens, of Mailer's Flat, Victoria, accidentally killed on H.M.A.S. Australia, on November 12.

Gone from the earth so swiftly,  
    Plucked like a flower in bloom;  
So young, so fair, so loving,  
    Yet called away so soon.

What though in lonely grief I sigh  
For one beloved no longer nigh,  
Submissive would I still reply,  
    They will be done.

I think of them in silence,  
    No eye can see me weep;  
But ever dear within my heart  
    Their memory I will keep.

A painful shock, a blow severe,  
To part with one I loved so dear;  
My loss is great, I'll not complain,

But trust in God to meet again.

Far away from all who loved him,  
Soldiers gently laid him to rest,  
In a far away grave he is sleeping,  
One of God's bravest and best.  
The midnight stars are shining,  
On a grave we cannot see,  
Where sleeping, without dreaming,  
Lies the brother who was dear to me.  
His warfare o'er, his battle fought,  
His victory won, though dearly bought;  
His fresh young life could not be saved,  
He slumbers now in a soldier's grave  
No sadder news to us could fall,  
When we heard that he'd answered his last bugle call.

(*Weekly Times*, Melbourne, Victoria – 12 July, 1917)

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### **THE LATE CLIFFORD OWENS**

The late Clifford Owens, the son of Mrs E. Owens, of Mailer's Flat, Victoria, was on duty on H.M.A.S. Australia when he met with an accident which caused his death on November 12. He fell about 20 feet and fractured the base of his skull. He was buried in the Naval Cemetery at South Queensferry, near Edinburgh, in Scotland. A headstone will be placed over his grave and regular care will be taken of it at Admiralty expense. Mrs Owens has received a letter of condolence from one of her son's companions on the Australia, in which he says: "I am pleased to say he was very much liked and respected by all who knew him, and the ship's company – officers and men – mourn over his loss. He is being buried with full naval honours. Please accept our deepest sympathy. We are going to erect a stone over the grave, and have had four artificial wreaths and two floral wreaths, given by the officers and men on board, placed on the grave."



**ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ON H.M.A.S. AUSTRALIA**

(*Weekly Times*, Melbourne, Victoria – 21 July, 1917)

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## IN MEMORIAM

### On Active Service

OWENS – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Frank Clifford Owens, accidentally killed 12th November, 1916, on H.M.A.S. Australia, active service abroad.

O'er the sea our sad thoughts roam,  
To where our boy sleeps far from home;  
Although your face we cannot see,  
We hold you in memory.

- Inserted by his loving parents, sisters and brothers, Warrnambool.

(*The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria – 12 November, 1918)

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### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 Royal Australian Navy members 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 the fallen was borne by the Australian Government.

(*Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921*)

Able Seaman C. F. Owens does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Who Fights On The Side Of God Need Never Be Afraid*



## Queensferry Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland

Queensferry Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland contains 180 First World War burials, almost all of them naval. There are also eight burials of the Second World War. There are 11 War Graves from World War 1 belonging to members of the Royal Australian Navy.

*(Information & photos from CWGC)*



*(Photo courtesy of Allan Noble - 2020)*

Photo of Able Seaman C. F. Owens' Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Queensferry Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland.



*(Photo courtesy of Allan Noble - 2020)*