

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Victory Medal WWI : Lieutenant Leopold Florence Scarlett,
Third Officer aboard the Royal Australian Navy submarine
AE1

Date

1914-1918

Medium

Bronze

Dimensions

Overall: 50 x 35 x 3 mm

Name

Medal

History

Lieutenant the Honourable Leopold Florence Scarlett was born in 1889 in Hampshire, England. He trained as a submarine officer for the Royal Navy but moved to Australia after being diagnosed with TB. He was retired due to being 'unfit' from the Royal Navy in June of 1913. Scarlett managed to recover his health after spending time in Queensland with his brother who was serving as Aide de Camp to the Governor. When the submarines AE1 and AE2 were refitting at Cockatoo Island in June 1914, Commander Thomas Besant of AE1 requested more trained submarine officers from the Royal Navy in London. The Navy Office responded with the assignment of Lieutenant Scarlett who had volunteered and been accepted for service in Brisbane. Scarlett was then appointed as a Lieutenant of the Royal Australian Navy on AE1 in August, 1914. In September 1914 AE1 was sent as part of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to New Guinea. This was an effort by the Allies to eliminate the German presence in the region and destroy German wireless communication stations. On September 14, AE1 and HMAS PARRAMATTA were directed out into the St Georges channel around New Britain and New Ireland in attempts to locate any enemy ships that may still be in the area. Although seas were calm, it was noted that the day itself was hazy and by mid-afternoon visibility on the water was reduced to five nautical miles. At 1520 HMAS PARRAMATTA spotted AE1 off Bernard Point. However, by 2000 that night AE1 had not returned to Simpson Harbour as agreed. HMAS PARRAMATTA and HMAS YARRA started to search for her that night but no trace was found. The next morning the search was widened and now included HMAS ENCOUNTER and HMAS WARREGO. At the end of three days searching, which now also included a number of smaller vessels available to the Australians, the search was concluded with no trace or clue as to what had happened to AE1. In a report back to the Admiralty Vice Admiral Patey suggested that AE1 most likely had struck an underwater reef and sunk in the deeper waters of the channel. There was also always the possibility that an on-board

fault or explosion might have led to the loss with all hands. Despite repeated attempts, AE1 has not been located to this day.