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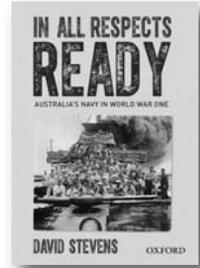
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BOOK REVIEWS

In all respects ready: Australia's navy in World War One

by David Stevens

Oxford University Press: Sydney; 2014; 469 pp.; ISBN 9780195578584; RRP \$59.95 (hardback)



The Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) part in World War I is less well known than the land campaigns and battles of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), but no less significant a contribution. Written by Australia's foremost naval historian, *In All Respects Ready* presents the most comprehensive and authoritative account of the Australian navy's involvement in World War I since the late 1920s when the naval volume of the official history series was published.

When the war broke out, the RAN was the most professional and effective force Australia had to offer the British Empire. Over the next four years, Australian ships and sailors would operate across the seas and oceans of the world working closely with the Royal Navy. Through the never-ending task of patrol and interception, the world's sea lanes were made safe for the movement of the Empire's troops and trade, and the blockade of Germany was established, maintained and tightened.

Aimed at both scholars of naval history and the general reader, *In All Respects Ready* uses a combination of ship and personal narratives set against the campaigns in which they served. Impeccably researched, and drawing on a wealth of previously untapped official reports, intelligence summaries and private diaries, *In All Respects Ready* offers far more than a chronicle of historical fact. The book is full of passages from diaries, letters and extracts from reports which illustrate the daily details of naval life and presents an engaging narrative of the war at sea that brings to life both the human element and a richly depicted sense of place.

Stevens is the Royal Australian Navy's historian and the Director of Strategic Historical Studies at the Sea Power Centre—Australia. He holds a doctorate in naval history from the University of New South Wales, spent 20 years as a naval warfare officer and still serves as an officer in the active reserve. He has published and lectured extensively on naval history and maritime strategy both locally and internationally.

In All Respects Ready includes a foreword by the recently retired Vice Admiral Peter Jones, AO, DSC, RAN. In between each of the 24 chapters the author has included

biographies of key personalities. The book includes a large number of black and white as well as colour photographs, several good quality maps, a useful list of abbreviations, a table of equivalent units and a table of comparative naval ranks. Appendices include a table detailing RAN involvement in North Sea Operations and a list of senior appointments as well as details of all the ships and their captains. The notes are arranged by chapter and comprehensively reflect the extensive bibliography. A detailed index will assist readers looking for particular information.

Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, AO, CSC, RAN (and coincidentally born in the UK), officially launched *In All Respects Ready* at the Australian War Memorial. He described the book as the most comprehensive and authoritative account of the Australian navy's involvement in the war and one that sets a new benchmark in our understanding of the role of the Australian navy in the Great War. "The Navy's war was conducted over the horizon – still crucial to Australia but out of sight and overwhelmed in the popular memory by the scale of casualties on the Western Front", he said.

In All Respects Ready culminates in the surrender of the Kaiser's High Seas Fleet and the end of the war. It then examines the war's legacy for the RAN. One of the most important elements was the decision by many RN officers and sailors who had served with the RAN to continue their naval careers in the RAN or seek further loan service. They provided an infusion of talent and experience into the RAN which helped to prepare it for the next war at sea.

Like their khaki-clad AIF brothers, the war witnessed the RAN forging its own unique naval and national identity while establishing a tradition of intrepid courage and dogged endurance. Stevens deserves to be congratulated for crafting a definitive work on this lesser known chapter of Australian military history. *In All Respects Ready* is highly recommended.

Marcus Fielding