

Alwyn John Medcalf



Stoker 2nd Class (Stoker II) 4625 Alwyn John Medcalf enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) on 2 February 1915. A Stoker worked in the engine room feeding the ship's boilers with coal.

He completed his basic training at the shore base, HMAS *Cerberus* in Victoria, before being posted to HMAS *Encounter*, an ex-Royal Navy light cruiser that had been commissioned into the RAN in 1912. He joined the *Encounter* on 8 July 1915 while it was undertaking a refit in Sydney.

Following the completion of the refit, *Encounter* sailed for Fanning Island where she landed a garrison of troops for the protection of the cable station situated there. The Pacific Ocean cable had earlier been cut by the German cruiser *Nürnberg* in September 1914, and reports had reached the Australian Naval Board that the Germans might make another attempt.

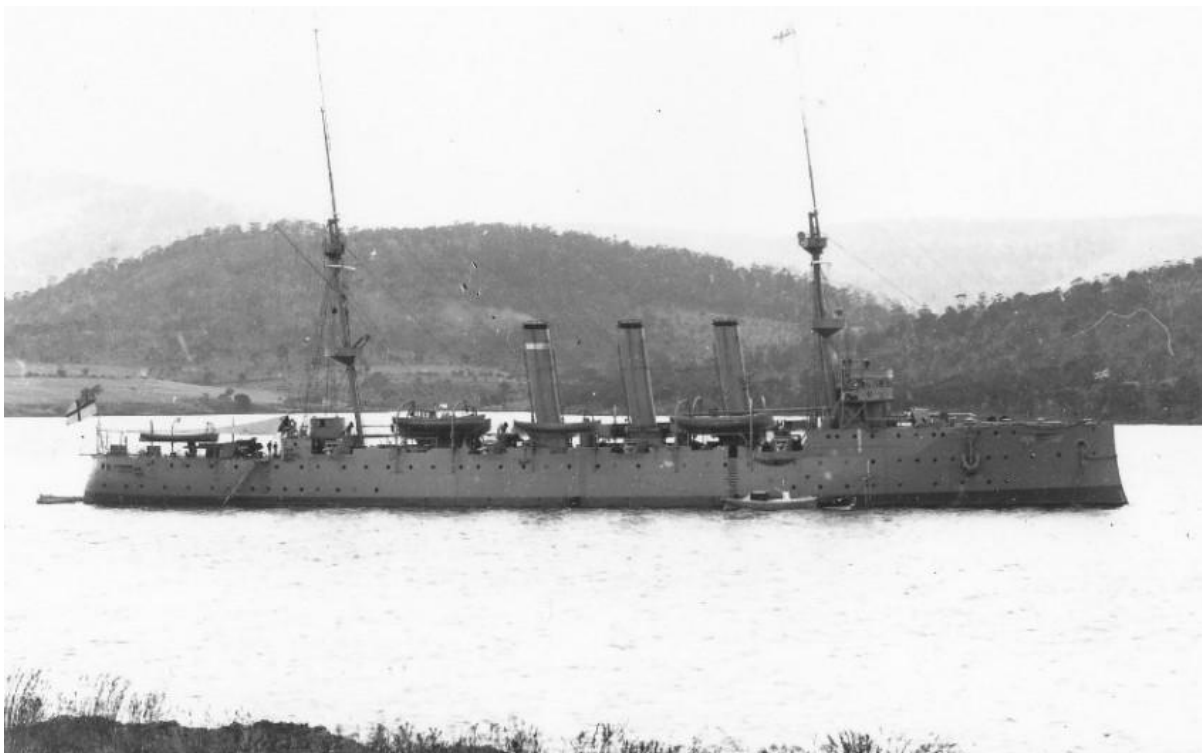
Encounter then patrolled around the Fijian Islands and Samoa until the end of 1915, when she was briefly employed in similar duties off Malaya and the East Indies. On 2 February 1916, Alwyn was promoted to Stoker, and his ship was recalled to provide protection for merchant shipping sailing around Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia.

Several German commerce raiders had escaped into the Atlantic, and it was believed that the importance of the trade routes around Australian waters might encourage them to extend their attacks south. With the rest of the Australian Fleet employed in other theatres, it fell to *Encounter* and several Imperial Japanese Navy cruisers to provide the necessary convoy escort and patrols.

On 12 January 1917, *Encounter* was ordered to New Zealand to escort a convoy of troopships to the Indian Ocean, where responsibility was then handed over to ships from the East Indies Station.

The first evidence of a German presence in Australian waters came on 6 July 1917 when the cargo ship SS *Cumberland* struck a mine ten miles off Gabo Island. The Japanese cruiser *Chikuma* was first to render assistance, then *Encounter* arrived from Port Phillip the following day to supervise salvage operations. The minefield had been laid by the German raider *Wolf*, which also later captured and sank the cargo ship SS *Matunga* off New Guinea.

During September 1917, *Encounter* took part in the search for the *Matunga* and then provided an escort for other steamships heading for Rabaul. *Encounter* then resumed her patrol of Australian coastal waters until the end of the war.



HMAS Encounter c.1917

On 24 November 1918, the Australian Naval Board despatched the *Encounter* to Fiji and Samoa, on what became Australia's first ever overseas humanitarian aid operation, where she debarked medical stores and a joint Army and Navy relief expedition following a severe outbreak of influenza among the Indigenous population.

She returned to Sydney in early 1919, where Stoker Medcalf departed the ship on 31 March 1919. He was posted to HMAS *Una*, a former German motor launch captured in 1914, the following day. He served on the *Una*, undertaking general purpose naval duties, until 24 November 1919.

Stoker 4625 Alwyn John Medcalf was then posted to HMAS *Penguin*, a depot ship moored in Sydney, until his discharge from the RAN on 3 February 1920.

Name: Medcalf, Alwyn John	
Service Number	4625
Date enlisted	2 February 1915
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Stoker 2 nd Class
Initial Unit	HMAS <i>Cerberus</i>
DOB	22 July 1896
Place of birth	Inglewood, Victoria
Marital status	Single
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Reid, Mrs, sister, Bourke Street, East Sydney, NSW
Appearance	Fresh complexion, brown hair, brown eyes, height – 5 feet 5 inches
Final Rank	Stoker
Final Wartime Unit	HMAS <i>Encounter</i>
Theatres of war served in	Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, China Station
Fate	Returned to Australia
Date discharged	3 February 1920
Nature of discharge	Time expired
Honours/medals	1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Re-enlisted in the RAN 26 April 1921 (served on HMAS <i>Platypus</i>) & discharged 17 September 1923. Brother of Cecil Medcalf MM & Alex Medcalf MM



HMAS Platypus alongside three J Class submarines, c.1922