

First World War, Merchant Navy

The term “Merchant Navy” refers to a nation’s commercial shipping and crews. During the First World War, merchant ships were requisitioned to act as transports, hospital ships and cargo carriers.

Those who served

Service records

The National Archives of Australia holds microfilmed employment records for Australian seamen who served on Australian merchant vessels between January 1922 and December 1990. The records are arranged by family name and give some personal information, the name of ships and dates of service.

For more information please see National Archives fact sheet 30 – Navy service [www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs30.aspx#section2]

Those who died while serving

The **Commemorative Roll** [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Commemorative%20Roll] includes the names of those Australians who in other respects would qualify as eligible for the Roll of Honour, but who were members of the Merchant Navy. Records in the Commemorative Roll contain the personal particulars, unit and the date of death of each person. Some records may contain cemetery or memorial details and next of kin.

Where they served

Official records

- AWM7, “Troopship records, 1914-1918 War” Arranged by ship and voyage. Not complete and content can vary. May include crew lists and some voyage information.
- AWM36, Navy records used by A Jose (includes United Kingdom records):
 - Transportation of Australian troops (BUNDLE 23)
 - Navies - British Stations (BUNDLE 26)
 - Home Station 1914-1919 (BUNDLES 27 to 31)
 - Transports and hospital ships (BUNDLE 39)
- AWM44 9/20* “[Official History 1914-1918 War, manuscripts:] Volume IX, The Royal Australian Navy by Arthur W Jose. Appendix 6, “Merchant Ships Employed in Government War Service”

Private records

- Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS) Prisoner of War Department records, 1DRL/0428 Contain lists of British and Australian prisoners of war in Germany, including merchant marine servicemen.
- Ian Campbell, *All in the same boat: the Australian Merchant Navy in the World Wars* MSS2060 Appendix 2 shows the locations and dates of attacks on Australian shipping during the First World War.

Books

- Lloyd's, *Lloyd's war losses: the First World War: casualties to shipping through enemy causes, 1914-1918* (London : Lloyd's of London Press, 1990) AWM call number: R 940.45 L793
- A W Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy, 1914–1918*, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume IX (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941)
Appendix 6 – Merchant Ships Employed in Government War–Service
[www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1416851]
Lists Australian merchant ships requisitioned for war purposes, including details of their owners, commanders, what they carried and where they served.

Photographs

- Collections Search [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search] provides access to digitised images of photographs, films, art, and private records held by the Memorial.
- PhotoSearch [recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/PhotoSearchSearch.asp] is the online photographic catalogue of the National Archives of Australia, and contains digital images of photographs from the collections in all state and territory offices of the Archives.
- Trove [trove.nla.gov.au] includes photographs and other images held by a range of major Australian libraries, archives, and other cultural institutions

Merchant Navy records for other countries

Canada

Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Genealogy Centre: Merchant Marine
[www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/genealogy/022-913.006-e.html]

New Zealand

Archives New Zealand Reference Guide: War
[archives.govt.nz/research/guides/war]

United Kingdom

The National Archives, UK: Merchant Navy
[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/default.htm]

United States

American Merchant Marine at war: records and contact information
[www.usmm.org/contact.html]